

LIBRARY
OF THE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
AT
PRINCETON, N. J.

DONATION OF
SAMUEL AGNEW,

OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Letter.

No.

March 15th 1855.

Case, Division

SCC

Shelf, Section

2713

Book, No.

No.

v. 2



CHRIST ALONE EXALTED,

IN THE

PERFECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAINTS,
NOTWITHSTANDING SINS AND TRIALS;

BEING THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

TOBIAS CRISP, D.D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AT BRINKWORTH, IN WILTSHIRE;

CONTAINING

Fifty-Two Sermons,

ON SEVERAL SELECT TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

IN WHICH ARE ADDED

NOTES EXPLANATORY OF SEVERAL PASSAGES IN THEM,

WITH MEMOIRS OF THE DOCTOR'S LIFE, &c.

BY JOHN GILL, D.D.

A NEW EDITION, BEING THE SEVENTH.

Mr. Cole, in his Treatise on Regeneration, says, "This Work savours of a true Gospel Spirit; they who carp at it, I fear, will be found wider from the Gospel in their Principles, than this Author (as they vainly imagine) was in his."

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace. And if by Grace, then is it no more of Works: otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of Works, then it is no more Grace: otherwise Work is no more Work.—Romans xi. 5, 6.

VOL. II.

London.

PRINTED FOR JOHN BENNETT,

4, THREE-TUN PASSAGE, IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

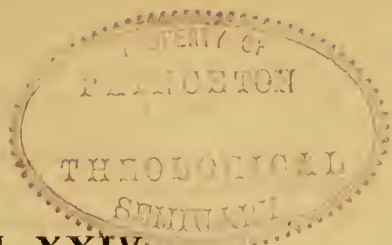
MDCCCXXXII.

THE EDITOR TO THE READER

THE following Sermons were preached near a hundred and twenty years ago; which will account for the stile and manner in which they were composed and delivered by the worthy Author of them: they were all published after his death, being taken from him, whilst preaching them, in short-hand-writing, and compared with his notes, or taken from them. And as they were not designed nor prepared for the press by the Author, they, no doubt, appeared with less accuracy than otherwise they would, had they been revised by him; who, very probably, would have left out some things delivered from the pulpit, at least have altered the phraseology and diction, if not some passages that needed explanation, and have been since matter of controversy, and for which reason, they must now be continued. Forty-two of these discourses were published quickly after the death of the author, in the years 1643, 44, 46, in three volumes 12mo., with recommendatory prefaces by Mr. Robert Lancaster, Mr. George Cockayn, and Mr. Henry Pinnel. In 1690, a new edition of these Sermons was printed with an addition of ten more taken from the Author's notes, by his son Samuel Crisp, Esq.; this edition is in quarto, and is very incorrect, as well as imperfect, and occasioned a warm controversy among some worthy good men about some points herein advanced; on account of which the learned Witsius, professor of divinity at Utrecht, a writer often mentioned in the following notes, wrote an *Irenicum*, worthy to be read by both parties. The republication of these discourses is not designed to revive the

controversy ; and the Editor flatters himself that he has, by his notes, explained such phrases and expressions as have been objected to, and set them in such a light as to prevent any captious person that might be inclined to engage in such work from doing it. In short, the sole view in republishing these excellent Sermons, which were wanted, being scarce and not easy to come at, is the same with the pious Author's in preaching them ; namely, the relief of distressed minds and consciences burdened with a sense of sin, and seeking for deliverance from it ; for which these discourses are most admirably calculated, as has been experienced by thousands of souls ; and it may be hoped under a divine blessing, that this will be the case of every one that reads them with such a view ; and for which purpose, they are sincerely and heartily recommended by

THE EDITOR.



SERMON XXIV.

HELP LAID ON CHRIST, MIGHTY TO SAVE.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

EVERY word in this text, as I have shewed before, carries a special emphasis in it, and contains a peculiar privilege of evangelic glory. We have observed already out of it, 1. That it is iniquity itself, that is charged upon Christ, as well as the punishment of it; Christ did not bear only indignation, but was clad with sin: "He was made sin for us," said the apostle; and there is no possible way in the world for persons to be discharged of their sins, but by Christ, bearing sin itself.

2. This iniquity was really laid upon him; Christ was as really the bearer of the sins of God's people, as a surety is really the debtor, when he willingly puts himself in the room of the principal; insomuch, that God cannot expect the debt any where, but of him. Christ gives his bond, and by that, makes himself the debtor: God accepts of this, and upon it discharges the poor sinners themselves; and if he will have payment, he must have it, where he himself hath laid the debt: see 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21.

3. It is the Lord that hath laid iniquity on him; which is the greatest burthen in the world, and might have sunk us for ever in the gulph of misery, if Christ had not put his shoulders under it.

4. None can dispose of iniquity to the comfort and safety of the people of the Lord, but he himself. Beloved, do not mistake yourselves any longer; you do but beat the air, whilst you think your prayers, tears, mournings, and fasting can lay it on Christ, it is the Lord alone. Your duties, indeed, are appointed for excellent uses, but never for this, to lay iniquity upon Christ it is the Lord that does it.

5. The Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ: this is one of the comfortablest truths you can hear, or have published unto you; the transaction of sin from you to Christ, is not a business now to be done, as if God were upon terms and conditions with you: I will lay your iniquities upon Christ, if you will do thus and thus. The text saith not, that the Lord will lay upon him, and yet if it did, it imports not, that he requires conditions and performances of you; but it saith, he hath laid iniquity, it is done already; your pardon is not only enacted in heaven, but it is also sealed upon earth. It is worth your observation, that which the apostle speaks in Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. In the beginning of the chapter, he taxeth those froward Jews, enemies to their own peace, with the establishing of their own righteousness, or rather going about to do it, and submitted not to the righteousness of God: and what is that righteousness? "The righteousness which is of faith, which speaks on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend up into heaven? that is, to bring Christ from thence; or, who shall descend into the deep? that is, to raise Christ from the dead: but the word is nigh thee, in thy heart, and in thy mouth:" the meaning is, the gospel is not now so remote from us, that we must mount up to heaven, to fetch it down, or go down into the bottom to fetch it up, but it is within thy heart, and in thy mouth; it is come down from heaven to thee; it is not reserved there for thy fetching of it; he hath done it.

I have mentioned this again to you, that you may see what comfort is in this, namely, that the Lord hath done it. It was said to the king of Syria, "Let not him rejoice that putteth on the harness, as he that puts it off:" it is the day of victory, that is the day of comfort, joy, and gladness; the days before it comes, are days of fear and doubting; but when it is attained there is rejoicing. When a prisoner is condemned to die, and a friend gone to court to get his pardon, all the while it is agitating, his heart is full of tremblings, fears, and achings; but when his friend hath brought a pardon, under hand and seal, and delivered it into his hand, then he leaps and rejoices: so all the fear and bitterness of your spirits proceed from hence, namely, oh it is yet to be done! I am afraid it may miscarry: nay, it is nigh you, in your hearts, and in your mouths; it is come to you, the Lord hath done it to your hand.

But, when did the Lord do this? From eternity, in respect of

obligation ; but in respect of execution, when Christ was upon the cross ; in respect of applying of it to particular persons, while children are in the womb, before ever they have done good or evil. There is great diversity of judgment about this : God applies pardon of sin, say some, at the time of conversion, and persons remain in a state of wrath until then. Others rise higher ; God applies it in baptism, say they ; but, beloved, the Lord loves his people with everlasting love ; there is not a moment of time in which iniquity is transacted back again from Christ, and remains upon a particular person. Take one unbaptized, supposing him elect, and a child of God, for whom Christ died, where are his sins ? In sin he was conceived and brought into the world ; where are these sins ? are they upon Christ, or upon himself, before baptism ? if they were laid upon Christ, when he suffered for them ; how came they back again from him ? who was the scape-goat that carried away the sins laid upon him, into a land of forgetfulness ; how came they back again ? if they came not back again, being laid upon Christ, then, even before baptism, the elect are discharged from sin, as other persons whose sins Christ took away.

I pass to a sixth consideration in the text, and indeed it is the basis that bears up the whole structure and frame of the gospel, putting the *emphasis* on the word (*Him*;) “ The Lord hath laid on *Him*, the iniquity of us all.” It is of infinite concern, as much as life and salvation is worth, that he, who bore the iniquities of men, should have a back strong, and broad enough to stand upright, and not be sunk under them. While the pillars stood firm upon which the house stood, where the princes of the Philistines met to make sport with Sampson, they were all safe ; but when they sunk, the house fell, and great was the fall of it, and they all perished in it : this discharge of sin, is the security of persons from wrath ; if the pillars that bear it should possibly sink, all were utterly lost and come to nothing. The apostle Paul, pleading concerning the resurrection of Christ, in 1 Cor. xv. 15, saith, “ If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins :” so if it be not Christ, on whom iniquity was laid, you are yet in your sins, and your faith is vain. Sureties are the comfort of imprisoned debtors, and, yet not all, but able ones : let a person bring twenty to be surety for him, to his creditor, if they be all as very beggars himself, he is but where

he was before ; he is not a jot the better ; let him bring one able surety, that the creditor can trust, that will pay the debt, then hath he joy and comfort. Beloved, if you had ten thousand sureties to stand for you, before God, if they be beggars, like yourselves, there is no comfort in them: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord," saith one, Micah vi. 7, "Shall I give a thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No, they are not able to make satisfaction. So, beloved, they are all beggars that we can bring: shall I bring one man to stand for another, or for myself? No man can make an agreement for his brother, nor redeem his soul; it will cost more to redeem it, and, therefore, he must leave it for ever. But, saith the text, "The Lord hath laid it on him;" here is a word of comfort. "Thou spakest to thy holy one in vision, thou hast laid help upon one that is mighty," Psal. lxxxix. 19. But, who is this *Him*, on whom iniquity is laid? Every one will suppose, the prophet takes it for granted it is Christ; and so it is; but, beloved, in truths of such concern as this, it is not good to go altogether upon trust, and to receive things, because every one receives them, but to have a sure foundation for them. Strength of consolation, hath not the voice of the people, but the word of life, for its security; and, therefore, it is good to see for certain, that this *Him* here, is Christ, and no other. The prophet speaks darkly, while he speaks of him that bears iniquity; the clearest expression he hath, is in ver. 2, he calls him a root out of a dry ground; and all along through the rest of the chapter, it is but *He*, and *Him*, and *His*. And, indeed, it is usual with the prophets, personally to point out Christ darkly; insomuch, that the weak-sighted, or rather the envious or malignant Rabbins, as much as possibly they could, cast a mist before every truth that spake of Christ; applying them still to this, or that worthy man, among those people, as to David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah, or such like. But the prophet, or rather the Lord, by the prophet, in this place, gives such lively characters of Christ, that they themselves were compelled to yield to the truth, that he meant him alone in this chapter. But we need not the testimony of man, (much less fear any opposition of theirs) to testify that it is Christ, whom the Holy Ghost means by him, that is here spoken of: observe the in of your bibles, and you shall find in all the evangelical

passages of the prophets, none come near this chapter in being applied to Christ, nor so many quotations by Christ, and his apostles, taken out of any other: to give you a hint in one or two places; iniquity was laid upon him that was "despised and rejected of men; we esteemed him not:" but who is this, that was thus rejected of men, and not esteemed? Christ applies this passage himself in Mark ix. 12. The margin of my text refers you to that place, and that refers you to this again: "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," &c. Who was this? Of all the prophets, I find Daniel most privileged to speak most plainly concerning him that bears our iniquities: the Lord meant to tell Daniel a secret, that shall be an intimation of the exceeding largeness of his love to him: the secret is this, "Yet seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness:" and afterwards he tells us, that at the end of so many weeks the "Messias shall be cut off, but not for himself:" here you may see plainly who it is that was wounded to death for transgression, it was the Messiah, that is, Christ; look in 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23, 24, the apostle runs over the most material passages of this very chapter, applying them by name to Christ; Christ also *suffered*, saith he; this answers to that "He was wounded for our transgressions: when he was reviled, he reviled not again;" this answers to that, "He was as a sheep before the shearer, dumb, who opened not his mouth:" and ver. 24, "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" here "The Lord laid the iniquities of us all on him;" naming Christ in particular, as the person who in his own body bare our sins. Christ then, it is clear, is he on whom the Lord laid our iniquities; Christ, who is that? a man would think it strange, that in a christian congregation there needs this A. B. C. to be taught to people, who Christ is; Moses, unveiled, say some; and if that be true, I am sure Moses's veil will obscure Christ: and I doubt there is so much of Moses in the minds and preachings of men, that Christ is quite forgotten among them. It is worth the while beloved, to know what this Christ is that was to bear iniquity; he must be something else than the common apprehension of men is of him, to do this. The prophet tells us, he is Immanuel, and the

Holy Ghost in Matt. 1. 23, expounds it, "God with us:" Christ is such a [*Him*] who is God and man; nay more, he is God and man so united, that both make but one person; and this one is he that bears our iniquities: he is so one, as that the several properties of each nature do not reserve themselves solely to themselves, but communicate them to the whole. The divine properties of Christ's godhead are not so inseparable to it, but the virtue thereof is communicated unto his human nature; and the virtue of the divine nature of Christ, is that which makes Christ of steel, as I may so speak; not to bow or bend under the heaviest weight that can possibly be laid upon him.

The godhead, it is true, is incapable to bear iniquity, and the human nature is as incapable of bearing it to any purpose. Should iniquity be laid upon the human nature, and the divine nature not support it, it would have sunk under sin, as a mere human creature: "He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh;" in respect of flesh it was the same, in respect of sin he was like it: he did not sin, yet he bore it, by the imputation of it, upon him; what now could this mere creature do? and how could it be strengthened enough to bear that weight that would crush a mere creature to dust and powder? But now, if the humanity bear sin, and the divinity bears it up in suffering, this gives such infinite validity to the obedience of Christ, both active and passive, that it becomes effectual to the purging away of sin: take a dark illustration of it. The body of a man bears a burthen, the soul is incapable of it, but it keeps up the body from sinking under it: set a dead man on his legs, and lay a small weight upon his shoulders, he sinks under the burthen and that falls upon him. What makes the living man stand to it, and carry it away? It is the soul in him that strengthens the body, and bears it up to stand under it, and bear it away. So the divine nature is a kind of soul to the humanity, consisting of soul and body, and is the form and strength of both; for the soul of Christ's human nature is not as the soul in man, giving being to the man, as is well observed; that is, as a form giving being and strength to the person of Christ: for in us the reasonable soul gives life and being to us, but in Christ the Godhead gives life to the reasonable soul of Christ; for, as the philosophers say, there are three souls, the vegetative in plants, the sensitive in brutes, and the reasonable soul in man; yet in man the reasonable soul is the form,

and hath the other two virtually in itself; thus the soul gives life to us; the Godhead gives life to Christ, and so all the sufficiency to bear iniquity proceeds from that. Now, beloved, when we consider Christ, we are not to conceive as if he were in all respects distinct from God, as usually we are apt to imagine; we conceive otherwise when we hear Christ did such a thing, than we do when we hear God did such a thing; but Christ is the one God assuming human nature; and God in it manages those things that concern the welfare of his people.

The main thing I drive at, at this time, concerning this point of laying iniquity upon Christ, is to shew what special ends and purposes the Lord hath in singling out him alone to bear iniquity. Though the Lord is pleased at all times to work strange wonders yet never did God do such a wonderful thing, to the amazement of the creature, as this one thing, to lay iniquity upon Christ. Sin is the hatefullest thing in the world to God; where it is found, a toad is not so odious unto man, as that person is in the sight of God: for though the Lord professeth he doth not afflict willingly, yet it agrees with his nature; but sin is most horrible and abominable; nay, the only abhorred thing in the world to God; that God should make Christ a beggar in the world, and the scorn of it, and make him suffer the most shameful, nay, the most accursed death, the death of the cross, is much; yet all this may agree with the nature of God; but that he should make Christ to be sin, is out of the reach of all the creatures in the world to apprehend how he should do it, and yet retain his love and respect to him.

Surely, beloved, a work of such extraordinary nature as this is, to lay iniquity upon Christ, must needs have suitable ends. You will laugh at that man, that will build a famous structure to keep a kennel of dogs in; to be at such cost for base ends. The end of things is always the rule and line by which they are measured: the end is always first in intention, though last in execution; and being first in intention, is that which all things conduce unto. A man makes a mould to cast a vessel, or a piece of ordnance; he hath the form of it in his head, and according to that he casts it, and fits his moulds, and suits all his materials. God hath special ends in his heart, for which he lays iniquity upon Christ; and certainly the thing itself must answer the end, and the end must be answerable

to that. God doth all things in weight and measure, and proportion.

And the truth is, beloved, there are admirable ends, every way answering that miraculous work of the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ; I shall instance in particulars, and therein shew how marvellously the Lord sets himself out to the world by it; in nothing did he ever shew himself, as in this thing. The ends are many, I shall shew you some of the chief, by God's assistance.

1. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, that so he may "lay help upon one that is mighty."

2. That *Christ might satisfy his great longing*, which he had lost, if iniquity had not been laid upon him.

3. That *he himself might be fully satisfied* to his own content, and be at rest. God himself, if I may so speak, had not been at rest within himself, if iniquity had not been laid upon Christ; nothing else could have satisfied him, that he might sit down in the enjoyment of himself as he would.

4. That *he might shew* to the world, especially to his own people, *the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin*, and the out of measure sinfulness that is in it: there is nothing that ever the Lord did, or the wit of man can do, could set out the abominableness of sin, as this one thing, the laying of iniquity upon Christ.

5. That *he might commend that unsearchable love of his to the sons of men*; with a witness, as I may say, God herein declares his love to man; many and sundry ways indeed he manifests it: "He causeth it to rain upon the just, and upon the unjust; he causeth the sun to shine upon all men, good and bad:" but all other ways of manifestation of the love of God to men, come infinitely short of this expression of his, laying iniquity upon Christ; "Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friends; but herein God commends his love to us, when we were enemies, Christ died for us:" but if this were a commendation of his love, what a commendation of it is here expressed, that he should not only die for enemies, but *bear that very enmity itself upon him*? That Christ should bear our sins, is more by far than the former.

6. That *he might make a clean people*; a people clean and fair enough for himself, to take pleasure in. There is no.

way in the world to make them so, that God might delight in them, but the laying iniquity upon Christ; this was the way to make them all fair and lovely, without any spot or wrinkle.

7. That the people of Christ might have strong consolation; there is but weak consolation in any thing in the world, but in this one truth [*the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ,*] that people can shed tears, pray, fast, and mourn, affords but weak consolation to this; for here is the fulness of it.

8. That his people might serve him the more freely, less interruptedly, and more zealously. There are many promises, as encouragements, to call out the people of God to serve him; but there is none takes off the soul from all kind of terror, and slavish fear, but this, “The Lord hath laid our iniquity upon Christ.”

9. That, at the appointed time of the Father, his people might enjoy the purchased inheritance, and the promised possession. There is no possession of the glory laid up for the saints in light, but by laying iniquity upon Christ; no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven. When we attain to the height of sanctification, we remain yet unclean, for there is pollution in the best of it: when we die, suppose we are more holy in life than any that went before us; yet there is not so much holiness of life in us, but that there remains still some uncleanness, and unmortification of life in thoughts and practice, some deadness and indisposition in our hearts and affections to holiness; and, with this unholiness, we lie down in the dust, if all our uncleanness were not laid upon Christ, that so we might enter into rest, as perfect and complete in him.

These are admirable ends! all the joys and comfort of believers, have their basis in these jointly, nay, in these severally and apart, being all of them full of sweetness, and “wine refined upon the lees.”

1. The Lord laid the iniquities of men upon Christ, to the end to lay help upon one that is mighty. You know, beloved, what our Saviour taxeth that foolish man with, that began to build, but could not finish; and, for the prevention of such folly, adviseth them to whom he spake, first, to sit down and consider what it would cost them; not like a forward person that goes out to war with an enemy, not considering his own, or the

strength of his enemy ; that is like the man that began to build, and could not finish : God is more wise than to begin thus, and let the work sink under his hands ; his full purpose was, and is, to save that which was lost, and gather together the dispersed : now had he gone any other way to work, as it appears to us, he had miscarried. Had not the Lord prepared Christ a body, and fitted it to suffer for us, we had lain still in our sins ; it lay, therefore, upon his honour and credit, that seeing he would save sinners, he should go that way wherein he might go through his plan, and that was to lay iniquity upon Christ. And, that that was the only way, you shall find expressly, in Isa. xxviii. 16, a notable prophecy concerning Christ ; there the Lord is manifesting that his main purpose was, in the great business of saving men from their sins, to find out such a one that there might be some rest to him, and that he might not fail in it : “ Behold, (saith he) I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” Mark how the Lord presses, as I may so speak, by gradations, the stability of the way found out for the saving of men from sin ; “ I lay in Sion, for a foundation ;” a foundation, what is that ? Foundations, you know, are the bottoms of buildings, that must bear up the weight of the whole structure, though never so heavy ; that is the property of a foundation : now, saith he, “ For a foundation, I lay in Sion a stone.” You know what our Saviour saith, in Matt. vii. 26, 27. “ He that heareth my sayings, and doth them not, shall be like unto a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Here was a sinking foundation ; and so all sinks, because the foundation falls : but mark, saith God, “ I will lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone ;” a rock that will not sink, nor yield, but stand firm. So that you see the foundation upon which our sins, the heaviest things in the world, are laid, is a stone ; that is, Christ that will not sink : but, he saith, not only he is *a stone*, but he is also a *tried stone*. You know that *probatum est*, written to a thing, gives abundance of worth to it. Armour of proof is precious, and is highly esteemed : that armour that is shot against, and yet not pierced, is tried, and hath *probatum est* upon it ; so Christ is made of the Lord the foundation to bear all our iniquities, as he

was proved and tried: he was tried by God, by man, by devils, by the godly, and in all he proved a *tried stone* that will not fail. He was tried by God, by his council in heaven, and with the weight of his wrath upon him on earth, when he suffered; you see that the Lord not only set men upon him, but planted his own cannons against him; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet Christ stands fast, "It is finished," saith he; "Father, I have done the work that thou hast given me to do." You see that the cannons of God's wrath could not beat through him; "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, nay rather that is risen again, who sits at the right hand of God: who shall lay any thing to our charge?" These could not break through this rock; he stands sure in all their batteries: he is a tried stone. He was tried by man too; and when all men tried, yet still he was a stone, and a tried stone. The godly tried him, he never fails, nor forsakes them; "He is my foundation, my rock, and my tower," saith David, he found him so, and in Psalm xlv. 2, 3, "Though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the seas, I will not be moved, I will lie down in rest and quiet:" again, "Thou art my shield, and my buckler, and my rock."

You that are oppressed in your spirits, in respect of the weight of sin, you apply to yourselves; if you would but try Christ, and acknowledge him the bearer of your transgressions, you should have sweet rest, and settlement to your spirits: "Son, be of good cheer," saith Christ, "thy sins are forgiven thee." They that try Christ, shall find themselves of good cheer; for they find by his bearing their iniquities, that nothing can pierce them. He that hath a shield of steel, and a proved one too, all the darts that come upon it, do not any more offend, pierce, or wound that person's breast, than if there were no darts in the world shot against it. Just such a shield is Christ, and, because of this, was he singled out to bear iniquity; and to this purpose, that he might bear off all the violence, that all the wicked men in the world can do, put them together; all the forces they can use, or raise against Christ, to trample down his honour, and lay it with the ground, what becomes of it all? "No weapon formed against thee, shall prosper." We have had experience of it; there is not one weapon this day, to your knowledge, that hath prospered against Christ, nor shall any hereafter. Christ is all

steel, all marble: and if there be a stone that cannot be pierced, he is that. It is Christ that bears thy iniquities, that is such a one; and if he had not been such a one, God had been disappointed in his purpose. God's people are called sheep, the devil is too subtle for them: the world is cunning, and they would soon be ensnared; but God hath chosen out a mighty one, one infinitely wise, to find out all the plots of his enemies, and to turn all their cunning into folly.

The devil, and the world, have tried him, all the elect have tried him, and death too; and all that could be done against him came to nothing; that all might see, what a mighty champion God had, to save poor sinners, that trust in, and rest upon him. The Lord laid iniquity on such a mighty one, that every one that lifts up the heel, may dash against the stones, and kick against the pricks, rather to hurt themselves, than the people of God.

Oh, beloved, that you could but behold the firmness of this rock, upon whom your iniquities are laid; it is not the storm of a temptation against you, shall make you fall; nor the blustering of divine wrath breaking forth; for the ungodliness of the world, that shall make you shake and tremble: the house that is built upon the sand indeed, shall be beaten down, when these storms beat and blow; but the house built upon the rock, stands as firm, as if there never were a blast at all.

We should consider, the other particular ends and purposes of God's laying iniquity upon Christ; and they are all of them so full of marrow and fatness, that it is pity to cast them aside, and not taste and eat abundantly of them: I should therefore proceed to the opening of the rest of them; some of which I shall speak of in the afternoon.

SERMON XXV.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD SATISFIED BY CHRIST ALONE.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL,

EVERY word in this text, as I have often told you, hath special weight. It is iniquity that is laid on Christ, as well as the punishment of iniquity; "He was made sin for us." Sin is a debt, he is a surety; the debt of sin, as he is a surety, is as really his, though not his own contracted, as if he had really contracted it himself; his own by imputation; so far his own, that God "in him, hath reconciled the world to himself, and will not impute their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19.

And it is the Lord, that laid our iniquities upon him; it is too much presumption to give the glory of it unto any creature; it is God's glory alone; nothing of man, in man, from man does it, but the Lord himself.

And the Lord hath done it; it is not now to be done; it is past, he hath laid iniquity. Also, observe out of the words, this, that we are now to come unto; "That the Lord hath laid *on him* the iniquity of us all." Had our sins been disposed of any where else, but on him, they had recoiled back upon us again; none can bear iniquity, to carry it into the land of forgetfulness, but the scape-goat, Christ. It is Christ alone, on whom the iniquities of believers are laid for their discharge.

This proposition, that our iniquities are laid on Christ, is the basis, that upholds all the consolation revealed in this chapter.

The main thing, I shall insist upon, will be to consider, what answerable ends the Lord might have in this most admirable work, of laying iniquity upon Christ; there is no work that administers matter of astonishment, and puts the reason and judgments of men so much to a nonplus, as this one work of laying men's

sins upon Christ; it must needs then have suitable ends: being but a means to conduce to higher purposes.

1. One great end of laying iniquity upon Christ, is, that the "Lord might lay help upon one that is mighty;" that so seeing he hath undertaken to discharge the poor believer from iniquity, he might go through the work, and not leave it by halves. Had iniquity been laid any where, but on Christ, the work of taking it away, had been left unfinished, so far as it appears to us; it is not conceivable to any man under heaven, how iniquity should be carried away, but by the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

But I will proceed: there are many other remarkable uses and ends, for which the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ. As,

2. That he might have full satisfaction and reparation of the injury done unto him, to his full content. It cannot be imagined, by all the wits in the world, how the justice of God violated, should be so satisfied, as in laying iniquity upon Christ. When Adam sinned, and by that act involved himself, and his whole posterity, into a state of transgression; nay, into a constant course of enmity and rebellion against God; by which justice was extremely violated, and the Divine Majesty insufferably affronted; it concerned God, for the maintenance of the honor of justice, to take order for the reparation of the violation, and affront of it: God could as soon cease to be, as not to take order, that justice violated, should be satisfied: You have an ordinary rule, "Whatever is in God, is God himself." Let justice be once torn from the Divine Nature, and it ceases to be: in this regard, I say, it concerns God, to repair his justice in the largest way of satisfaction, that might answer it to the full: and yet, nevertheless, though the Lord was resolved, that justice should not be violated; for it is a certain position with God, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot nor tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground:" much less a jot or tittle (if I may so speak) of his essence shall fall; yet, I say, though the Lord would have justice, even to the utmost satisfied; it was at the same instant, and everlastingly in his thoughts, that some few * of those creatures that had thus violated it, should not sink under that reparation that it stood upon. Now here comes in a business, that no wisdom, but the infinite wisdom of God, could

* Rom. ix. 27

possibly either conceive, or contrive, to wit, a way of reconciliation of his justice and mercy; in the saving of such creatures, justice should be fully repaired, and yet the creature, violating justice, be saved, is a riddle that none but God himself could ever untie. These two things therefore being jointly settled in the thoughts of God himself, he casts about with himself, how he might maintain and manifest both, without the prejudice of either.

The Psalmist saith, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" here is the agreement between both. The Lord knew well, that if the creatures violating justice, were themselves to make satisfaction to it, they must sink and perish, and be undone for ever; there was like to be nothing but ruin, and that eternal; and this payment would be very slow, and destructive to the creature, therefore God liked it not.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks expressly from the Lord, "As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner." I will not stand to discourse nicely, as if there were any difference between the desire and will in God; I know there is none; but in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God to us, we may conceive, that the Lord, for the satisfying of justice, will rather have the creature destroyed, than the continual violation of it should be without reparation; yet this cannot be called pleasure or delight, that he hath in this thing; but for the prevention of the violation of his justice, he is contented, the creatures should some of them perish*; "I desire not the death of a sinner;" it is not the delight I have, I take no pleasure in the thing.

I say, therefore, seeing it is the pleasure of God, some of his creatures should not perish, and yet justice violated should be repayed too; he casts about with himself, how these two things might stand together, and not one jar against the other; for this purpose, it pleased the Lord at the first, to propound to himself, and so to publish his mind to his people, concerning a way of reparation, by some present payment, in the blood of bulls and goats, and other sacrifices; upon the heads of which, as you have it in Levit. i. 4, those that offer the sacrifices, were to lay their hands, and so there was a manifestation of atonement; in this, God had some content, for that time; but the full pleasure of

* 2 Thes. ii. 10.

the Lord, was not answered in this way of reparation ; no, not though Jesus Christ himself, was shadowed out under those sacrifices ; yet the Lord saw not that fulness of content to himself in this obscure way : and therefore, he findeth out a better, and a more contenting way to himself ; and what was that, you will say ? look into Heb. x. 5, you shall there find, how the apostle fully shews, that the Lord was not to the utmost so satisfied, as he would be, in that first way ; and, also, what way he sets up to give himself full content, and that gives direct answer to the thing in hand ; “ Burnt offerings and sacrifices thou wouldest not, (saith Christ) in burnt offerings and sacrifices thou hadst no pleasure :” mark but this phrase and expression well ; which plainly sheweth the way that God then took, to repay his own justice in the blood of bulls and goats ; though for the time it gave him some, yet not that full content, such as he could take full pleasure in.

But some will be ready to say, that when the apostle spake thus of sacrifices and burnt offerings, he meant those simply considered, without respect unto Christ whom they typified.

To this I answer, That not only in the sacrifices, simply considered in themselves, without Christ, God took no pleasure, is his meaning, but under favour, he goeth further ; for, if you mark the opposition well, you shall find it is not made between them considered as types of Christ, and considered simply, and abstractively from him their substance ; but the opposition is made between the whole service, as it then was, and the new way that Christ, when he came in the flesh, brought into the world to please God with ; therefore saith Christ, immediately after, “ Because thou tookest no pleasure in them, lo, I come : in the volume of thy book it is written of me ; it is my delight to do thy will, O God ;” and in that he saith, “ Lo, I come, he taketh away the first, that he might establish the second :” so that you see he makes the difference between this way that God took to satisfy himself then, and the way in which he was satisfied when Christ came in person, wherein he, by once offering up himself, perfected for ever them that are sanctified ; the way in which Christ comes to give God satisfaction, is, by his personal offering up of himself a sacrifice ; though Christ was darkly apprehended under those sacrifices of bulls and goats, yet God did not take so full pleasure in them, as he did in Christ once offering up himself ; and therefore he saith, after he had once

offered up himself, “He sat down at the right hand of God.” It is therefore Christ’s personal bearing of iniquity upon the cross, once for all, that gives unto the Lord full pleasure and content; and hence you shall find in the same epistle, when the Lord had before established the priesthood, after the order of Aaron, and that administration of service that was among them, the apostle declareth that he changed it; and the reason of this change he also sheweth in Heb. x. 1; because “The law having but a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of things, could not make the comers thereunto perfect;” there being a necessity of remembering sin again every year; so that this was but a lingering payment by piece-meals, as I may so say, I mean in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God. Indeed such a full way of payment God hath in his secret thoughts in Christ, as that he was then fully satisfied and contented in them; but he did not manifest himself in those sacrifices, and in that administration, to have such complete payment all at once, as when Christ came into the world; therefore as the priesthood was changed, so Christ, being made a priest, after the order of Melchisedeck, God liked his payment so well, that he swears, that notwithstanding Aaron’s order, “Thou art a priest for ever.” I say again, the Lord took such full content in Christ’s personal bearing iniquity, that now he seeth, that there is no way in the world to give himself satisfaction, or could be devised, like this way; and for this cause, the former priesthood being changed, he saith, nay, he swears, “Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck;” so that by this you may perceive, how abundantly the Lord found himself satisfied in his mind in this, that iniquity is laid upon his own son; no way in the world would have done but this.

If any man should undertake to agree for his brother, he could not give God content; no man can redeem his brother; it costs so much to redeem a soul, he must leave it for ever. It is not the fruit of the body that can answer for the sin of the soul, that cannot give God content; though a man could establish an innocent, nay, an angelic righteousness, yet this could not satisfy God to his content; it is this, “Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God, that gives him full content, Christ’s own coming to bear iniquity.

It may be you will say, what did Christ come for, when he saith, “Lo, I come?”

I answer, It is plain he came to be in the room of those sacrifices that went before; and why did he come in their room, it may be further demanded? God could not take full pleasure in them, therefore he came to give satisfaction in their place.

Now, what was the office, you will say, of the priest in offering sacrifice?

It was, by that offering them, atonement might be pronounced by the priest upon the people, they laying their hands upon the head of the beast.

Now the business of Christ's coming for the pleasing of his Father, was to bear the sins of his people, which those sacrifices bore, (Christ being typified under them) but imperfectly in regard of that full satisfaction he gave; for there is none like this. In Prov. viii. 30, observe how Christ, under the name of Wisdom, declares the Lord's pleasure in him: "I was daily his delight; I was before him as one brought up with him;" as if God could not look upon any thing as his delight but only his Son.

Yea, may some say, as he was the Son of God, he was daily his delight; wherefore, in verse 31, you shall see in what respect he was so: for he saith immediately after, "My delights were with the sons of men;" here Christ seems to apply the delight that his Father took in him, unto this condition, as his delight was with the sons of men; and wherein doth Christ express it more than in this, in that whereas they were sunk in sin and misery, it was his delight to recover them, and bring them to shore with safety, that would have been drowned, except he had laid hold of them, and took them out; and hence in Isaiah liii. 11, 12, the Lord expresseth himself wherein he taketh his greatest satisfaction; "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" what was that? Certainly the bearing of the iniquities of all his elect upon himself, on his own body on the tree. The hand of God was just, and could not but be so; it could not smite but where it found a fault; the transaction of the iniquities of men on Christ, by way of suretyship, drew the stripes of the Lord upon him, and so "he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied: and the pleasure of the Lord," saith the same prophet, "shall prosper in his hands." What was in the hands of Christ, that the Lord saith should prosper? This was the main thing, the taking away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist testifieth; for this was the very office of him, and the glory

of his ministry, to point out with his finger unto Christ, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29. This was the chief business of Christ which "prospered in his hands; the handy-work of Christ is done with such effect and fruit, that the pleasure of the Lord prospered; so far as that prospered, the pleasure of the Lord prospered and is fulfilled.

This is of infinite concern to us, that our iniquities be laid upon such a back, that God may take full satisfaction to himself; if any man conceive that the coming of Christ into the world, proclaims a mitigation of divine justice, I think they are much mistaken; Christ came not to abolish the law, much less to take any thing away of the divine essence of God himself.

That Christ should make the justice of God more remiss, is to rob God; and the pleasure of the Lord could not prosper in the hands of such as should rob him of that which is so near and dear unto him; therefore the mitigation of divine justice was not the business of Christ, which prospering pleased God; but in that the back of Christ was made strong and broad enough to bear the weight of vindictive justice, therefore the pleasure of the Lord prospered: "A body hast thou prepared me;" that is, the Lord fitted and steeled Christ to be able in bearing of iniquity, that he might fetch his full stroke, and take out the full payment that justice itself could require of him; and this infinitely concerns us, that Christ is the person on whom iniquity is laid, whereby justice is satisfied to the full; for certainly, if our surety had not given to the Lord that full content he desired, woe had been to every one of us; for so much of divine justice as was not satisfied upon the back of Christ, the Lord would have looked for upon our own: this is certain, reparation must be had; so that had not Christ suffered; had it not been that God acknowledged himself that he had all the satisfaction he looked for, or could desire, he had come upon every person where any thing was left behind unsatisfied. Now all the creatures under heaven, put them together, could not give God perfect satisfaction for sin; there would have been something behind, that the elect could never reach unto; and in what a sad condition then should they have been, when God should have come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them, which he might do; nay, which he would have done, if he had not

taken full satisfaction upon Christ. Had not he worn out the rod of vengeance to the stumps, the remainder should have been upon our backs, and that would have pierced us with an everlasting sting. Certainly there is not the least sin, but deserves all the punishment of this, and of the world to come; and if Christ did not give God full satisfaction for both, he did for neither; and it could not have been said of him, "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," if there had remained any thing to be done after Christ had done his work.

Beloved, it was the happiest day that ever came, and the gladdest tidings ever heard, that "Mercy and truth met together, and that righteousness and peace kissed each other;" for if God in his infinite wisdom had not brought it thus to pass by the sufferings of his Son, all the world should have sunk and perished for ever, before these glorious attributes of God should have grated and jarred one against another.

3. As the laying of iniquity upon Christ, was that which gave God full satisfaction, when nothing else could do it; so he did it, to save Christ's longing. The truth is, beloved, as Christ studied nothing more than to give his Father content, so he again desired nothing more than to give his Son content, and to answer him in that he most affected and desired. It is true poor sinners are saved by Christ, but that is a subordinate thing. Christ's main aim is at giving his Father content; "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4. And in another place, "This commandment have I received from the Father, that of all that thou hast given me, I should lose none;" in that Christ "took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him." The eye of Christ was upon the pleasing of his Father, and to give him consent; as the glory of God is the chiefest end of all things, the same was the chief end in Christ's eye, in procuring the salvation of his people.

The Lord delights in his Son; "I was daily his delight," saith Christ, Prov. viii. 30. He took delight in nothing so much as in him; now what is the fruit, the consequence of it? "Whatsoever I ask of the Father, he will give it me: Father, I know thou hearest me always," saith he, John xi. 41. There is nothing he desires, cost what it will, but the Father will give it him, and part with for his sake: now what is it that he desires

of the Father above all things? "All my delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. Observe the universality of the expression; he saith, not only *some*, but *all* my delight was with them; I care for nothing else but that they might do well; let it therefore cost what it will, so that the sons of men miscarry not, I shall have my heart's desire. Take away these from Christ, and you take away the delight of his soul. If God could, or would not, give Christ the sons of men, he must cross his mind; but now, rather than that should be crossed, Christ must bear iniquity, forasmuch as there was no other way to save poor lost miserable man. It is true, the bearing of iniquity itself, simply considered, is no desirable thing; and therefore of itself, it could not be the object of Christ's longing, nor desirable unto him, but as it served for a further end, and conduced to advance that which he took most delight in; so, for that, he desired and longed to bear it. And, for the proof of this, you shall find many expressions of scripture, by which it will appear that there is nothing in the world Christ hath thirsted after so much as to bear the sins of men, and the wrath of God that is due to them. In Psal. xix. 5, the Psalmist speaks literally indeed of the sun in the firmament, but mystically of Christ, that "it goeth forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth, like a strong man, to run his race." Christ is the sun of righteousness; the sun hastes not more to dispel the corrupt vapours and fogs that are settled upon the earth, and to exhale them up towards itself from it, that so it may be clear and wholesome, than Christ hastened, nay, eagerly longed to exhale those noxious and corrupt vapours of sinfulness and wrath due to his own people, that they may be a peculiar people, all fair before God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, as in Cant. iv. 7; Eph. v. 27. No strong man is more hot and eager to a combat, wherein he hopes to work deliverance for those that are captives, than Christ is to fight the battle of the poor captives of the Lord, that they may be redeemed from bondage; and "He hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psal. lxviii. 18. Such gifts had Christ, and that for the rebellious, even when they were no better; such as the leading *captivity captive*, delighting as *a strong man to run his race*. There is no man more eager to run a race to win the goal, than

Christ was to obtain this one thing, to deliver man from the bondage of sin and misery. In Psal. xl. 8, the Psalmist hath this expression, (when Christ had said, *Lo, I come*, presently he addeth) "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is written in my heart;" or, as it is in the margin, "It is written in the midst of my bowels;" as much as to say, the bowels of Christ do yearn within him, to come in the room of a burnt-sacrifice, to bear the sins of the people; "It is written as a law in my heart; it is my great delight."

In Luke xii. 50, you shall find how mightily the heart of Christ was set upon it to bear the iniquity of his people; "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" What was this baptism? it was nothing else but Christ's bearing our sins upon the cross, as Peter expresses it, in 1 Pet. ii. 24: "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

This was the thing Christ so much longed for, and was so much straitened in his Spirit about that he could not be at rest till it was accomplished; and, in Luke xxii. 15, you shall further see, how he was set upon it, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover before I suffer." The passover, you know, was nothing else but the paschal lamb slain and eaten, and a type of Christ, and his bearing and suffering for sin; Christ is that paschal lamb, "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Now, "with desire have I desired to eat it;" what is that he means? That his heart was so eager of being the paschal lamb, to bear iniquity, that he could hardly stay, but must be acting it in every type; he had such a mind to bear the sins of his people, that, for the sake of it, he desires with desire to act the thing in the type of it. The phrase expresseth largeness of bowels, that he could not contain himself.

Now, beloved, what thing else, in all the world, could satisfy the longing of Christ, but having the thing his heart was set upon? When women long, how do you satisfy them? They long for one thing, do you give them another? Nay, that will not give them content; you must give them the thing they long for. This was the longing of Christ to bear the sins of his people, to come in the room of burnt-sacrifices. Now how could this longing of his be satisfied, but by having the thing his heart desired?

This is a thing which infinitely concerns every soul that would

have joy unspeakable and glorious founded upon a rock that cannot be shaken, that Christ did long for this thing. Certainly it cost the Father such a price, to make Christ an offering for sin, that if he himself had not had a mighty mind to it, he could not have pressed him, nor have yielded to give his own dear and only Son, and deliver him up for us all. Oh! what a task was he put unto! it went to the heart of him (as I may so say) to do it. What thing in heaven or earth could have ever moved him to do it, but only the longing of Christ, his own willingness? You see how God advanceth the renown of Abraham, in that he spared not his only son, but yielded him up in the integrity of his heart, that was so dear unto him; therefore, saith he, "In blessing I will bless thee," &c. Certainly God could not part with any thing in the world that went so near to his heart, as his Son Christ, much more his forsaking of him, as he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God saith elsewhere of him, "Thou art my beloved Son, I am well pleased with thee," Matt. iii. 17. And yet now to forsake this beloved Son, how near must this needs touch his heart? Now what could move the Father to this strange, this unparalleled act of his, but the extreme eagerness of Christ? And what moved Christ to this, but that he well knew, that if he had not suffered, his poor little flock should have been for ever drowned: he had for ever lost that which the Father had given him, and they had perished; this made him long to bear iniquity, and his longing made the Father willing that he should bear it.

You, that are fathers, can apprehend what a thing it is, to have your child's throat cut, especially you that have but one son, how near would it go to your heart! But to have his throat cut, and that for the saving of a varlet that would have cut yours, if it had been in his power, is not this example beyond your reach? God did this for you; and this is not all, he was not only contented to let Christ suffer, but was himself a spectator, and beheld him suffering, and saw the tragedy acted: and this was not all neither, but he had his own hands in it; there was his determinate council upon it; nay, more, there was actually the hand of God himself upon him; he did not only put him into, and leave him in the hands of miscreants and devils, to revile and blaspheme him, but takes him up himself, and scourgeth him with the rod of his own indignation.

Oh! what should thus turn the bowels of God, to break out so upon his dear Son Christ, to beat and bruise him as he did, but his own longing! Oh, it is of infinite concern unto us, that the bowels of Christ were unto such a work: for the weight of it would have been so heavy, and the task so great, that without some vehement incentive, he could never have brooked it: so tedious it was that you know what he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" if he had not had a longing, the bitterness of the cup would have made him flinch from the thing; but his heart was so set upon it, that he overlooks all this, and will go perfectly through the work.

You know how the eagerness of a man in a business he delights in, makes him overlook discouragements in it, that will make others give it over. It is said of Jacob, though he served seven years under Laban, and that with rigour, for Rachel, "yet he thought it but a little time;" and why was that? Because *he loved her*. Love breaks through all difficulties: so then the heart of Christ being so set upon the thing, that iniquity should be laid upon him, therefore it was done, or else Christ should have lost his longing.

4. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, to the end that he might shew to the world, especially to his own people, "The most abominable loathsomeness and filthiness of sin." Beloved, it is but a mistake in the minds of some people, that the preaching the gospel of Christ, Christ's bearing the iniquities of his people, is a way to lessen the apprehension of the ugliness of sin. I dare be bold to say, all the rhetoric in the world, setting out all the aggravations of sin, and thundering out all the threatenings and curses of the law, with all the terrors of God's wrath for it; nay, the execution of the terrible wrath of God, all at once, upon all the creatures in the world, could not, would not, so discover the abominable loathsomeness, and filthiness of sin in the sight of God, as this one act of God's laying iniquity upon his Son. If all the world should sustain iniquity, and thereby all the wrath of God at once, the Lord should lay his wrath but upon mere creatures, when all that were done; but when he lays iniquity upon his Son, and spends all his wrath upon him, this shews an extreme bitterness of the heart of God against sin. If a man meet with a Spaniard, or any he is at open enmity with, and smite, or slay him, there would not hereby appear such in-

dignation against this enemy, as if this man should take his own son, and go near to cut his throat, for committing some act against his pleasure : a man will beat his servant for a fault, when his son for the same shall go free, and there shall be no notice taken of it ; but if at another time you shall find his spirit so stirred up, that he lays about him, and is ready to brain his child, if he comes near him ; this shews the depth of indignation that is raised in him, and the greatness of the fault in his eye, that stirred it up. Now, beloved, when the Lord should be moved, that he doth not only fall foul upon all the creatures, but upon his own Son, and becomes the executioner of him, and delivers up his soul for sin ; what an expression of wrath against sin is here ? a mild and meek master when he is provoked to beat his servant, and to turn him out of doors, it signifies the fault to be great ; but when the son cannot be spared, but must be forsaken, this must be a fault that nothing else can take off the edge of spirit against it : and, I say, the smarting of the Son of God's love, especially in such a manner as he did, certainly shews the extremity of the indignation of God against sin.

Therefore, beloved, if ever you would come to see the evil of sin, that it may be a bridle to restrain you from it ; when profit and pleasure, or any such thing come in, and would tempt you to sin, look upon Christ, and see that God would not spare him a stroke ; and all this for thy sake, lest thou should perish under this vengeance ; and wilt not thou fear to commit that sin, that cost so many blows to his dearest Son ? There are many other admirable reasons, wherefore God laid iniquity upon his Son : but I cannot speak farther of them now.

S E R M O N XXVI.

THE LOATHSOMENESS OF SIN, AND THE IMMENSE-
NESS OF LOVE DISCOVERED.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

WE have passed through many excellent things this precious text affords us; we are come to consider the rock of our salvation, the mighty one, upon whom the Lord hath laid this help, who is set up as a corner stone, to bear up, without sinking, so heavy a weight as “The iniquity of us all.”

I shewed you, that it was none but Christ: the main thing I have propounded, to be considered from the singling out of Christ himself, to bear our iniquities, is this, namely, to find out what the proportionable ends of the Lord may be unto such an unparalleled action as this: as it is the greatest work that ever he did, so it hath the greatest ends that ever he aimed at. Expert workmen level their works, frame their materials, according to the business for which they are to serve; they make the moulds fit for the vessels to be cast in them. If men therefore are so wise, as to order things in their weight and measure, how much more the great God of heaven and earth.

There are sundry admirable ends and purposes the Lord aims at, in laying iniquity upon Christ; and, as he aimed at such ends in the thing, so he excellently accomplishes them, to the great content of himself, and comfort of his people.

1. He laid iniquity upon Christ, “That he might lay help upon one that is mighty.”

2. That he might be satisfied to his own content: all the world could never have contented God; no, not the dissolution and annihilation of it, only Christ bearing the iniquities of men:

which otherwise should have brought the dissolution and destruction of themselves, and of the world ; “ As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner ;” but as concerning Christ bearing of iniquity, the pleasure of the Lord prospered in that.

3. The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, to give Christ his own longing. “ I was daily his delight, and my delights are with the sons of men ;” take away the sons of men from Christ, and you take away his delight ; take away that from a man, in which his delight is, and you take away all his comfort ; if God should not give Christ the sons of men, he should cross his delight ; now rather than do this, seeing the sons of men cannot be given to Christ, but he must be made sin for them ; iniquity shall be laid upon him. Christ hath a mighty strong heart, even to this very thing, when he saith, “ Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God :” that is, that will which burnt offerings and sacrifices could not do, the taking away sin ; “ I delight to do thy will, O God,” saith he ; that is, to bear the sins of men ; to come in the room of those sacrifices, and do their business. “ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you ;” that is, the paschal lamb, which was nothing but a type of his bearing the sins of men, being “ the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.”

4. The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that he might represent to the life the hideousness and abominable loathsomeness of sin to the whole world. Of this I shall speak something more than the last time would permit. There is no way wherein sin will appear so out of measure hateful to God, as by laying it upon Christ. You know, beloved, that Haman, that great courtier, when he had received an affront from Mordecai, at once to make his own greatness known, and the heinousness of the crime, as he conceived in this affront, thought it was but too poor a satisfaction to have the life of that single man ; and therefore he devises, and accordingly proceeds in his device, to have all the nation of the Jews cut off at once for such a fact. The greater the suffering is for a crime, the more it manifests to the world the greatness and detestableness of it. You know there is none in the world, nay, all the world together, is nothing so dear in the eyes of God, as his Son ; and if it had been possible that sin could have been connived at, it would have been upon his Son,

being his only by imputation : a fond father may possibly wink at a fault in a son, which he will not pass by in a slave ; but when a father falls foul upon a dear child, upon whom a fault is found, and the fire of indignation restrains his affection, this argues the extremity of the rage of the father, and the heinousness of the crime that incenseth it. When Jonathan had so transgressed the commandment of Saul, that he said, “ Though it be Jonathan my beloved Son, he shall surely die for it ;” this shewed the extreme rage in the heart of Saul, and the apprehension of a heinous fact not to be borne with. When the Lord will lay iniquity upon Christ, and, when he finds it upon him, if he himself shall not escape ; nay, if there shall not so much as be a mitigation of wrath, though the crime be upon him, no otherwise than only as a surety ; this shews that iniquity is of such a loathsome savour in the nostrils of God, that it is impossible he should have any partiality or remissness wherever it is to be found. The more easily a crime is passed over, the less it is in the eye of him by whom it is passed over ; but when a fault shall not be spared, no, not on the back of an only son, this sin is out of measure sinful. I dare be bold to say, as I said before, that all the rhetorical aggravations of sin, whether in respect of the filthiness of it, or of the wrath that attends it, or the miseries that proceed from it, come short of this one aggravation of it ; the Lord hath laid iniquity upon his own Son.

It is true, sin is aggravated much, as you see in Isaiah i. 12 ; “ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me ? saith the Lord ; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts : I delight not in the blood of bullocks, nor of lambs, when ye appear before me ; who hath required these things at your hands ?” &c. Here are expressions to aggravate sin in respect of the filthiness of it, exceedingly, that it makes all our prayers and sacrifices loathsome in his presence ; but mark it, beloved, when all these expressions shall but only reflect upon the person of a mere creature ; (God cannot away with it, his soul hateth it, in me and in thee, that are but men and women) they are nothing so much as when these shall reflect upon his own Son ; he cannot away with it in his Son, it is as abominable to him on Christ himself ; this expression ariseth higher than all the aggravations in the world besides. Suppose that God forsakes all the sons of men for sin, this aggravates not so much the

hatred of God against sin, as to forsake his own Son, as he complains; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" my soul is heavy unto death. When God laid iniquity upon Christ, he forsakes not the world, but his own Son, for sin; therefore it must be an exceeding abominable thing: the truth is, God singled out Christ to bear the sins of men, for this purpose, because his back is strong enough to bear all the indignation of God at once, the creature is too weak to do, and vindicate divine justice against sin; the creatures cannot pay God but by piecemeal, and yet could never have made full payment; therefore the extremity of God's indignation against sin, cannot express itself in the latitude of it upon them; for it would have beat them to dust, and yet not be satisfied. A little fire to-day, and a little more to-morrow, burning continually, is something; but when all that fire, that would burn many years, should be set together to burn in a moment of time, it must needs have more of the fierceness of fire in it, than if it had burnt by several parts. The fierceness of God's indignation being all at once upon the back of Christ; I say, all that fierceness that should have been protracted to eternity upon the offending creature, all that flame of wrath being contracted at once upon Christ for the sins of men, infinitely more expresses the greatness of the indignation of the Lord, than if it had lain upon all mankind to all eternity. The torments of hell we conceive infinite, have indeed a beginning, but they have no end, they are lengthened out to run in a parallel line with eternity itself; but now, suppose that all this torment should be contracted, and equivalently contained in the limits of one minute of time, and all this wrath to have broken out at one clap; had not there been more fierceness of wrath thus breaking out all at once, than being protracted to eternity? Even such were the sufferings of Christ for the elect upon the cross in that short time; they equivalently contained all that torment and wrath that should have lain upon them to all eternity. If he had not suffered for them at that instant upon the cross, they themselves had suffered for ever and ever. Oh, beloved, this infinitely aggravates the most abominable loathsomeness and hatefulness of sin: and therefore what the church complains of in Lam. i. 12, is as true, nay, more true of Christ himself; "All you that pass by, behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day

of his fierce anger:" it was the day of his fierce anger indeed; never was there such fierce anger, as that when Christ "bare our sins on his own body on the tree." Take notice therefore, I pray you, that, as I told you before, it is a most abominable slander that is now cast upon the gospel of free-grace, to say, that the preaching of this doctrine extenuateth sin in the eyes of men, and causeth such an over-cast upon the filthiness of it, that it must needs appear less filthy to men than it otherwise would. I say, there is no minister in the world, that is able to set out the abominable filthiness of sin, and the bitterness of God's wrath expressed against it; nothing can set it out so much as this, that our iniquities are laid upon Christ.

It is true indeed, the Lord's laying of iniquity upon Christ gives rest to the hearts of poor believers; seeing their sins are transacted from them, and so consequently the desert of them, that they feel none of the smart of the rod, nor the mischief of sin, Christ bearing their sins, and thereby their punishment for them; yet, though sin be transacted from believers, and they freed from that wrath it, in its own nature, deserves; yet it doth, and will, appear far more in its ugly shape and own nature, upon the back of Christ, than if it remained upon the person himself that hath committed it.

5. As God's laying of iniquity upon Christ sets forth the filthiness of sin, so it serves to commend to his church the most immense and incomprehensible love that ever he shewed or expressed in all the world. The quintessence, as I may so speak, of God's love is mightily set forth in it.

Indeed, the Lord hath abundantly manifested his love to mankind in those privileges mentioned in Psal. viii. 3, 4, "What is man (saith David), that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Here is a love David could not conclude how great it was, and therefore he expresseth it by an expostulation, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Now, wherein is this love manifested? "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and thou hast put all things under his feet:" here is love, to make man the Lord of the rest of the creatures; but yet there is a greater love than this: when man had most shamefully revolted, in all equity and reason as we conceive, God should have singled out other creatures, and

not rebels, as men were, to be the objects of his love ; but, though man, and only he, deserved wrath, yet he singled him out, and he must be his greatest delight, and more near and dear unto him, than he was before.

Now, if you do but consider what it cost God to make man partaker of all that goodness a creature can be made capable of ; the love of God will be exceedingly aggravated, and the excellency of it shine with a more dazzling brightness. If God had given or parted with that for man that should cost him nothing, there had wanted that particular to aggravate his love, though otherwise it might be exceedingly great, and our happiness no less ; but, beloved, when he shall be at so much charge, as to part with him that is so dear unto him, the Son of his love, in whom his soul delighteth ; and when, to make man partaker of all that love, he was content to pay so dear, that his only son should be made an offering for sin, and be made subject unto death, even the most accursed death of the cross, that they that be afar off might be made nigh ; that God, I say, should part with his own Son, and that upon such hard terms of a bitter and an accursed death ; this sets out his love in an inconceivable manner, beyond parallel, nay, beyond the reach of finite capacities.

The apostle, Rom. v. 7, 8, (endeavouring to set out this love of God to men) tells us, that no man can be found that hath laid down his life for a righteous man ; “ For a good man, (saith he), peradventure some men may dare to die ; but herein hath God commended his love to us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us :” here is a commendation of love indeed, beyond all that ever the world expressed ; “ Greater love hath no man, (John xv. 13), than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends :” but, if you consider, what friend this is that Christ laid down his life for, you will say indeed, no greater love than this can there be : that friend was an enemy, till that life was laid down ; this, I say, is admirable love, upon which the apostle, in Rom. viii. 32, speaks excellently, “ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things ?” As if he had said, what simplicity is it for any man to think, that any should be so precious in the eyes of God, for the manifestation of his love, as his Son ; or that any thing should be too dear to bestow upon us, seeing he did

not stick to give him? As other things are but toys in comparison of his Son, so the gift of his Son, especially to die for man, was a most high expression of love; yet it is a far higher expression of it, that Christ should *bear the sins of man*, than that he should be given to die for them; for, for Christ to die for them, comes far short of his bearing their sins. Affliction is not contrary to the nature of God; God can smile upon persons, when they are under the greatest contempt that may be; he can delight, and please himself with them in that condition; but where he charges any sin, he abhors. And some may think it strange, that such a poor sinful thing as man, should have such gladness of spirit in the midst of tribulations, as Paul and Silas, to sing for joy in prison: it is a wonderful thing that sinful men should have such gladness of heart when under afflictions; and yet that the innocent Son of God should be in such distress. what is the reason of it? Had not Christ more power to bear the rod, than poor weak man? Why then was not he as joyful under afflictions as weak frail man? He was so faint, as to sweat drops of blood, and to roar in the anguish of his soul, and cry out in the bitterness of his spirit; whereas poor sinning man leaps for joy, and sings for gladness of heart, as our martyrs have done in the fire. The reason is this, they that thus sang for joy, had the discharge of all their sins; they saw that God in Christ was reconciled, and imputed no transgressions unto them: "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. If sin lie as a sting wounding the spirit of a man, this is insupportable; none can go away under it lightly and merrily; but if it be taken away, the spirit of a man may be sustained. They that had such joy and gladness, their sins were done away: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return to Sion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fly away," Isa. xxxv. 10.

But you will say, while every one that lives godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, how shall they obtain such joy and gladness?

They are the ransomed of the Lord. What is that? they are ransomed from their sins; a Saviour is come that saves them from them; so that they may be full of joy, though they meet with tribulations; but, as for Christ, the Lord is pleased to lay

pon him, though he take it from them. And as Christ their iniquities, so he was fain to stoop; his spirit was need more than others, that did not suffer for sin as he did, and had nothing like the strength that he had.

This now must needs commend the love of God to men, that while they, who deserved wrath, are in rest and peace, Christ not only bears their afflictions, but their very sins; that God should not only expose his Son to the rod, but put him into a posture of wrath; for putting him into a posture of bearing sin, must needs put him into a posture of bearing wrath; this heightens the love. It is a great and high expression of love to adopt a stranger, and make him co-heir with an only son. If one that hath but one son, and that a beloved son, do this, he shall be a mirror to the world; if he take in a stranger, a thief and murderer, to divide the inheritance between his son and him. But, beloved, for God not only to take in traitors and thieves, to be co-heirs with his own son; but also lay the felony, murders, and treasons of such, upon him, and execute him for this, that they may be the sons of God; this, I say, is astonishing love, whereunto there is never a parallel in all the world. Had not the Lord laid iniquity upon his Son, making him, as it were, abhorred for a time, this love of his to men, in the utmost extent of it, had never been expressed.

The dearer the things are that a man will bestow upon his friend, the greater is his love to him. When David would express his love towards God, though Araunah, the Jebusite, offered him all things gratis for sacrifice, yet he answered, "I will not offer that to God which shall cost me nothing; hence he shewed his love to God, in that he did not stick to be at charge for him; so the more the Lord is at cost and charge for his people, the more his love appears unto them: now, what charge could he be at greater, to shew his love to them, than to lay iniquity itself upon Christ? If a man were able to convert his body and soul into the nature of a toad, or any vile thing, to save a galley-slave from hanging; ne cannot express so much love in it, as the Lord expressed in making his Son to be sin for us. Every creature of God is good; toads and poison, that make the heart of a man to rise and loath them so much, as they are creatures of God, are good; but sin, as it is no creature of God, so there is nothing ugly and loathsome but that in his

eyes. Now that God should cloath his Son with that which is so abominable in his eye, to save sinners, that could not be saved but by his being made sin for them; this commends the love of God to be rare and admirable, that it cannot be fathomed, the depth thereof being bottomless and unsearchable.

The love of God in making his Son to be sin that you may be sons, as it is expressed to you in the word of grace, that you may the more easily behold the riches and excellency of it; so he is also pleased to set it out in his feast of fat things, the Lord's supper; there you may see the riches of it, and behold in this visible gospel, in breaking the bread, this Son broken for you, and in pouring out the wine, the shedding of his blood and life for you; all which is there held forth; and the Lord himself takes notice of such the apparent and proper excellency of his own love in giving Christ to be sin, that in the gospel, though there be no other feast, yet he would have this feast to be as a testimony of it; therefore he saith, "Do it in remembrance of me;" and "it shews the death of Christ till he come," saith the apostle: it is so great, that it never must be forgotten; this is the prime end of the Lord's supper: the Lord looked principally at this, in instituting this last supper, even the keeping in remembrance the death of his Son. You shall find it so, that seeing it is so great a love, that there is none like it, there should be a feasting to the commemoration of it; that so the greatness of it may be fastened in our hearts, and we may be so much the more to the glory of that grace that did not disdain to lay our iniquities upon his only Son, that we might be discharged from them. To him therefore be the praise.

SERMON XXVII.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ALONE CLEANSETH OUR SINS.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

To pass by things formerly delivered, the present subject in hand is, “The Lord hath laid our iniquities upon” [Him,] he hath singled out Christ above all the world, to lay them on him. The main thing that we are to consider upon this, is to declare what ends there may be answerable to such an unparalleled work as this. Of all that ever the Lord did, there was never such a marvellous work as this done by him, as to make Christ the sin of men; it was the greatest work he ever did, and therefore, certainly, hath the greatest ends.

1. He laid our iniquities upon Christ, as I have heretofore shewed you, that so he might lay help upon one that is mighty.

2. To the end he might satisfy himself to his own content.

3. That he might satisfy Christ’s great longing.

4. To shew unto the world, especially unto his own people, the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin.

5. That he might commend to his people the unsearchableness of his love. There are other remarkable and useful ends, for which the Lord did this; as,

6. That he might cleanse and purify his own people, in such a manner, that they may be comely and amiable in his eye; that he might take pleasure in them, and shew the fondness (if I may so speak) of his love unto them, and make them his very familiar and bosom friends.

I beseech you consider it well, it is impossible that any creature in the world, and man especially, should have such beauty and comeliness in him, that God should take delight in him, but

by laying of their iniquities upon Christ: "The heavens are not clean in his sight; nay, he charged the angels with folly; how much more filthy and abominable is man, that drinketh iniquity like water?" Job xv. 16.

Seeing then there is in man such filthiness, how can God take pleasure in him whilst he is thus abominable? Now it is by iniquity he is become thus filthy, loathsome, and abominable; till sin, therefore, be taken away, he cannot appear clean and comely; this is further evidenced in Ephes. v. 25. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish;" that is, he gave himself in the room of it, to stand in its place and stead; he gave himself to be sin for it, to be that which the church was before of itself: but what was his end, that he drove at, in all this? namely, this very thing, "To present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

So that the end of Christ's becoming sin, and bearing sins, was to make them, who by nature were filthy, clean and pure, without spot or wrinkle. Had the Lord laid the iniquities of his own people any where else, but upon Christ alone, his church would still have remained filthy; none else could have so cleansed them, but still there would have remained some spot; they should not have been completely holy and without blame. Beloved, it is a vain conceit, and smelleth too much of exalting in the creature, to think that God hath laid the iniquities of his people upon their performances, that they should take them away from them, and wash out the filthiness they are besmeared with, and so make them lovely in God's sight. As for such as are of this opinion, I must tell them, that it is an accursed sin, and exceeding derogatory to God's glory, and redemption by Jesus Christ. Suppose a man hath committed a sin; to get himself cleared, say some, let him go and humble himself, fast, pray, mourn, weep, and repent, and then he shall have a discharge presently, by all this; but let me speak freely unto you, all your performances, fastings, prayers, and tears, are never able to present you without spot or wrinkle before God; but, when all is done, there will be spots and wrinkles still; there

will be some sin lying upon the conscience that hath strength and life in it ; nay, if I should say, there will be more spots and wrinkles than there were before, I should but say the truth. Suppose a man's face were full of spots of dirt, and this man should go to a nasty channel to wash his face with dirty water ; will his face be cleaner, after he hath so washed, than before ? will it not rather be more dirty than it was ? surely, none can imagine that thereby it will become altogether clean ? nay, will it not be made altogether filthy with such filthy water.

But some will be ready to say, Why will you call the righteousness of men, their performances, prayers, tears, fastings, and mournings, but channel water to wash away sins ?

I answer, beloved, I may, I will call them so ; the prophet Isaiah calls them worse, in Isa. lxiv. 6, “ All our righteousness, nay, all our righteousnesses, are as a menstruous cloth, and as filthy rags ;” the prophet makes no exception at all ; he doth not say some, but all our righteousnesses : take it in the largest extent, be it what it will, it is no matter what it is, it is no better than a *menstruous cloth* : the best righteousness, meaning not only the prayers, tears, fastings, and performances of wicked men, men that are not renewed and sanctified, are filthy and menstruous things ; but *our* righteousness, the righteousness of the best of us, yea, even of the prophet himself ; nay, all our righteousnesses are filthy, and full of menstrosity, the highest kind of filthiness.

Also that which the apostle speaks in Philip. iii. 6, 7, is full to this purpose, where he saith expressly of himself, “ That concerning the righteousness of the law he was blameless :” mark what follows immediately ; “ but, (saith he) what things were gain to me, I accounted loss for Christ.”

But it may be objected by some, that he here speaks of his blamelessness before his calling, and not of his righteousness after it, and therefore this text serveth not the purpose.

But mark what he saith afterwards, “ Yea, doubtless, and I account all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord—and do account them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is by the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,” ver. 8. Where he speaks of the esteem he had of his

own righteousness, even after his conversion ; he accounted that to be but dung, and desired not to be found in it ; for herein he comprehendeth every thing, save only the righteousness of God by faith.

Mistake me not, beloved, it is not our tears and humiliation that can fetch out one, even the least stain in the heart of any person ; the best tears in the world are but muddy, and full of sinfulness ; for if there be no filthiness in your tears, then there is no need of Christ ; but if there be filthiness in them, then how can that which is filthy make clean from filthiness ?

Beloved, mistake me not, I do not absolutely say, that tears, considered in their own nature, are filthy ; but that as they are shed by us, there is so much filthiness in them as to besmear a clean face ; and, if so, then certainly they are not able to wash and make clean a dirty one. Suppose thou hast sinned, and also hast sighed and poured out thy soul in tears before the Lord, thereby to be cleansed of thy sin ; I ask thee this question, Is there not more filthiness added to thy former sin ? and is there not need of something to wash away the sinfulness of these tears ? But suppose there might be some tears that have not pollution in them, yet in all this thou hast done but thy duty ; herein thou deservest nothing at all at God's hands for the taking away of former sins.

But, beloved, there is so much filthiness in the best of tears, that if thou wert clear from the charge of any sin before ; if thou hadst done thy duty without making any addition to former sins, yet the very failing in thy tears is enough to undo thee for ever, and to make thee loathsome and hateful in the eyes of God ; so far are they from making thee clean from sin : so that if the Lord should have laid iniquity upon performances, to be carried away by them, instead of making the performers clean, they would have made them but more filthy than they were before : no, no, beloved, it is only " the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cleanseth us from all sin," as in 1 John

7. I say, in the sight of God, that we might be presented clean and spotless before him. The Lord hath set open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness for you to wash in, and be purged from them, even the blood of his Son ; and there is no other in the world but that can do it.

It was the mistake of Naaman the Syrian, when he thought

that the waters of Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, were as useful, and had as much virtue in them to cleanse the leprosy, and take it away, as the waters of Jordan had. That which God hath given a cleansing and purifying nature unto, to cleanse a leprous soul from sin, is nothing else but the blood of Christ.

When a man seeth another labouring by fasting, and prayer, and tears, one would think that that should make him clean; out all the tears in the world are not able to do it; God hath not appointed our services and performances, our fasting, prayers, and tears, to make clean the heart of any; he hath appointed and ordained the waters of the sanctuary, the blood of Christ alone, to do it; and nothing else but that can do it: "Now are you clean," saith our Saviour to his disciples, "through the word that I have spoken unto you," John v. 3. What word was that which he speaking made them clean? It was this, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake;" this is that which must make a person perfect before the Lord, the blood of Christ believed on: this was that the apostle desired to be found in, namely, Christ, not having his own righteousness upon him; well knowing there was no other way to become clean and accepted of God. Isa. i. 16, the Lord proposeth this course to his people; "Wash you, make you clean, take away the evil of your doings from before your eyes; and then let us come and reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as wool." Where note, first, there must be washing made, a making clean, before there can be coming to God; there can be no communion with him, till a soul be cleansed; and whereas many are apt to think their own performances will wash and make them clean, it is but a vain conceit; for saith God, "I will wash you with clean water, and I will purge you thoroughly from all your filthiness, and from all your idols," Ezek. xxxvi. 25. This is the tenor of the new covenant, so that there shall be no more any ground of difference, nor breach between you and me for them. And again, "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out your transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember your sins," Isa. xlii. 25. But how doth he this? Only, as I said before, by the blood of Jesus Christ, as you have it in that observable place, Ezek.

xvi. 7, "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; and I spread my skirt over thee, and I washed thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away all thy filthiness;" it is therefore a high presumption for the creature to take that upon himself, which is peculiar to God only; he only cleanseth from sin, and that only by the blood of Christ; it is that which makes them clean and pure in his sight. It is a thing of infinite concern to us, that God should lay our iniquity upon Christ, to make us a clean people for himself; for he is of infinite purity, that he cannot endure that person where the least spot of sin is found; he must for ever loath and detest him. It is the mistake of some, that God should bear with some, and not with other sins; this is to alter, and to destroy his justice, and so him, himself, to maintain that he bears with the sins of infirmity, small and trivial, but not with scandalous sins; God abhors infirmities, as well as enormities; and if Christ by his blood doth not cleanse a man as well from the one as the other, they will cause God to take vengeance for ever. In *Psa. v. 4*, David saith, "That he is a God that hath no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with him; and that he hateth all the workers of iniquity." There cannot be any "communion between light and darkness," *2 Cor. vi. 14*. If there be darkness in men, there cannot be communion with God the Father of lights; if there be the least sin in men in his sight, undischarged, there can be no coming to him, nor thinking of him with comfort, till that be taken away by Christ; and therefore in *Hos. xiv. 2*, you see what course the church takes, that she may be delightful in the eyes of God, "Take away all our iniquities, and receive us graciously;" mark it well, there must be a taking away of all iniquity, before there can be a receiving graciously. And then, from this occasion, is offered, what follow, the calves of the lips; that is, the praising of the name of the Lord. The church doth not take upon herself the business of taking away iniquity, but commits it to the Lord; so that cleansing of the soul from sin, is only his work, and he must take all our iniquities from us, before he delights in us, that we may be "received graciously, and loved freely; Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded; and then draw near to God, and he will draw near to you," *Jam. iv. 8*.

There is no coming near to God, while sin is in the hearts and

hands of men ; there is no drawing nigh of him to us, so long as there is any filthiness upon us : now, beloved, would you be a clean people, that the Lord may delight in to have fellowship, and make his abode with ? know, that you can never be made thus clean by your own doings ; it is the blood of Christ must do it . it is true indeed, that doth not take away the actual * inhabitation, and doing of sin in this life, but it takes away the filthiness of it out of God's sight ; so that, though we sin, the filthiness of it is taken away by it from God's eye, that he delights in us ; Christ's bearing iniquity carries away all the distastefulness of sin ; he hath taken away every thing in it that might occasion discontent between God and us, and by this means God comes to take pleasure in us : in regard of the filthiness of our sin, we should have been far from God, (as we are, considered in our natural estate without him) had not Christ taken and washed it away in his blood. Christ's coming into the world would have been in vain, if not to take away sinfulness itself. Sin, where it is, is the most loathsome thing to the Lord that can be, and makes the person so ; but the coming of Christ into the world, and bearing of sin, carries away all loathsomeness of it in his people, and by this means the Lord comes to have pleasure in them ; which he could never have done, if there had remained any of the loathsomeness of sin in them. Now nothing in the world takes it away, but the blood of Christ alone, that we may see herein the exceeding displeasure of God against it. The truth is, beloved, the breath of man stinks so abominably in the nostrils of God, that he cannot abide him ; wherefore our Saviour hath provided so great a quantity of incense, that takes away the evil scent of sin, and the Lord's displeasure. It is in this case with him, as it is with a mother sometimes, when she washes the face of her children ; if the face of the child be washed, she will kiss it ; but if it be dirty, she will not touch it : so if the heart of a believer be washed from the guilt of sin, the Lord is well pleased with him : but if not, there is no coming near him. In Mal. iv. 2, the prophet tells us of the " Sun of righteousness that shall arise with healing in his wings ;" you know that it is only the sun in the firmament, that makes the air, in which we live, clean, and purgeth it from fogs, and draws up to itself those gross and noxious

* Rom. vii. 23.

vapours, and so makes it pure and wholesome for man to **take** pleasure in living in it. In the night and winter, the air is full of thick mists and gross vapours, which ascend up out of the earth, but when the sun ariseth, it draweth them away: certainly, beloved, this is true spiritually of the Sun of righteousness, and none but he, he exhales the impurity in which men live, and pollute themselves, and so takes away their sins; only Christ can draw away the noxious vapours, the filth of sin, that men may have communion with the Lord, and live in love and comfort one with another, and not infect, or be noisome to, or offend one another. None but the Sun of righteousness can draw the corrupt vapours out of our hearts, that God himself may not be offended with us, but come near unto us, and delight in us; and till then, he will not, nor have any fellowship with us; it is said, that "God knoweth the wicked afar off," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. As it with those that are infected with the plague, men will not come near them, be in the place where they are, or in the air where they breathe; so man being infected with the plague of sin, must be purged, and made clean and pure, that so God may not be offended with him, but may take so much pleasure in him, as to come near unto him, as Christ said to the spouse in Cant. iv. 7—9, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee:" mark the fruit of it, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."

When the people of God are all fair, and without spot, then God falls in love with them, I mean in the expression of it; and the church saith, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," Cant. i. 2. All proceeds from hence, the church is all fair and without spot, having no imperfection, or blemish at all in her; which can only come unto her by the comeliness of her husband.

Now do but consider seriously, and weigh in your thoughts, what a privilege of privileges this is, that iniquity is laid upon Christ. If any thing else in the world should have been set about this work, it would have left scatterings, nay all, or more behind; but Christ carries it away clean, "The Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world," John i. 29. He, as I have often told you, is that scape-goat that carries them away into a land of forgetfulness, insomuch that God himself shall not remember them any more. "In those days, and at that time, (speaking of the days

under the gospel,) shall the iniquities of Israel be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found," Jer. l. 20. Christ carries them so away, that they are gone, and no notice taken of them.

7. God laid our iniquities upon Christ, that his people might have strong consolation, and their hearts might not faint, nor be discouraged. Consider this especially, this very day, this fearful time; this is that which must lift up our hearts and heads in this very day of extremity, when people are at their wit's end: whatever becomes of your outward carcasses, yet here is joy unspeakable and glorious for you, there is peace for you in Christ; this is that to which only is ascribed fulness of joy in scripture. Look into Isaiah xxxv. 10; "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away:" I hope the Lord will in this time of extremity, fasten this truth upon your spirits. I will give you a hint of the consolation that is hidden in this text; it may be, you may not apprehend it at first sight; "The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs, and with joy upon their heads;" consider what kind of joy it is, *everlasting joy*; joy that shall not fade, nor die; it shall have no end; ebbing and flowing, it may have of itself, but it shall never be abolished, nor vanish away; contrary to the joy of the world, and all other joys besides. In them there is an interruption, they are not everlasting; no other joys are of continuance; but the ransomed of the Lord shall have everlasting joy, that is, joy without mixture; sorrow there may be, but there shall be no occasion of sorrow any more.

But it may be you will object and say, Who are these, and when shall it be? It will be in heaven, it cannot be here upon earth.

Nay, but mark the time when the Lord says this joy shall be; "The ransomed of the Lord shall return to Sion with joy." There can be no joy, till a man be the ransomed of the Lord. Suppose an inhabitant of this city, be taken captive in the Turks' gallies, he cannot return home, nor be joyful till he be ransomed, till the money for his ransom be paid down: now the joy of God's people flows from hence, namely, the ransom that Christ hath paid down for them: you know what a ransom is, it is nothing else but this; when a person comes and lays down a sum of money to redeem one from under bondage, (under which, he that

is to be ransomed lives) and gives full satisfaction to him by whom he is thus held; and when the payment is made, and satisfaction given, the person is set at liberty. This it is to be ransomed; in this condition we were all of us slaves, and held in bondage under sin, hell, wrath, and the justice of God for it. Now Christ hath set us at liberty; we are the ransomed of the Lord, for whom Christ hath satisfied God, and given him full content; God holds us no longer prisoners, he having borne our sins and carried them away: thus then are we discharged by Christ, and redeemed from bondage, and brought unto Sion; and therefore, even now, we may return with songs, and with everlasting joy upon our heads: this Sion is not heaven, but the church of God upon earth. The truth is, as soon as the price is paid, men may begin to have fulness of joy; thereby they come to be discharged of all their debts; they are set at liberty; and then when God hath by his Spirit, given them to believe this, and by faith to see this in particular concerning themselves, then they return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: in Luke ii. 10, 11, you shall find the Lord sends an angel from heaven, on purpose, to disconsolate shepherds, upon this admirable message; "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Why, what is that, that should be such ground of joy unto them? "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" Thus the words run, *A Saviour*, what is that? The Holy Ghost expounds it in Matt. i. 21, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins:" so then this is glad tidings, when people can hear that Christ is come to save them from their sins; therefore, when our Saviour would cheer the poor man that came to him to be cured by him, though he did not come for it, nor expected such glad tidings from him; yet Christ well knew what would most raise his heart; and therefore, he applies that as the best cheer of all unto him; he saith not, "Be of good cheer," for I will heal the infirmities of thy body; but "Thy sins are forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2. And, indeed, this is that, that joys the hearts of the people of God.

And so likewise in Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known to you, (saith the apostle) men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not

be justified by the law of Moses:" well, what was the issue and fruit of all this? Mark it well, beloved, though the Jews grudged at this doctrine, and opposed it with might and power, yet in ver. 4, 5, you shall see how welcome this message was to the Gentiles; "But when the Gentiles heard this, they were exceeding glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

You see the believing Gentiles received this tidings with gladness, and were filled with joy at the hearing of this doctrine; namely, the discharge of their sins, that they were not imputed unto them, but fully forgiven them.

Now, brethren, look upon the present time, you may see what sadness fills the hearts and faces of men, even of God's own people; their lives are this day, as it were, in their hands; they are ready to sink, their spirits are ready to fail them; they look every hour when they shall be cut off by the sword; what bitterness is this wherein they are! What now will stay up! What, the hope that our lives and estates shall be spared! No, there is no certainty of that; but here is that which will do it, when all is lost and gone, and the worst is come, Christ hath all mine iniquity laid upon him; here is that that will fill your hearts with joy, when all other joys forsake you. God, in Christ, is become my friend; he is at peace with me, reconciled, and will be good unto me; and still you shall have ground to say, "However it be, yet God is good to Israel, to them that are of a pure heart;" that is, have their hearts purified by the blood of Christ. You shall never have joy of heart, and settledness of spirit, (especially in times of extremity as these are) but in this one truth; that God himself is reconciled unto you, that your sins are all blotted out, that you are the beloved of the Lord, that he hath not one sin to charge upon you, and that he will not deal in wrath with you. There is no bitterness of spirit, nor cause of any, in the worst afflictions and calamities that can come upon a person whatsoever, if sin be taken away.

It is sin, and only sin, that makes affliction bitter and heavy to men: take away sin, and afflictions are flea-bitings; you will rejoice in them, trample on them, see the love of God embracing you in them, and carrying you through them. Look upon the apostles and disciples of our Lord, and consider how they underwent their afflictions, and the carriage of their spirits in them:

when Paul and Silas were whipped, and covered with their own blood, and ready to perish with their stripes, yet they were filled with joy, and sang in prison ; why did they so ? (may some object and say :) surely, the reason was this, they saw the Lord, he smiled upon them, and embraced them in his arms, their sins being taken away from between God and them : hence was their joy, else their afflictions would have sunk and swallowed them up.

O! beloved, come life, come death, if Christ be yours, if your iniquities be laid upon him, all is well with you ; both life and death will be gain unto you ; even death itself shall turn to your advantage. Observe the resolution of Paul, who being assured of this, that Christ was his, “ To me to live, is Christ, and to die is gain,” Phil. i. 21. Neither life nor death could come amiss to him ; it is no matter which ; for whether I live or die, I am the Lord’s ; therefore, if death come, it shall be welcome, and if life be still spared, it shall be welcome. Upon this consideration that Christ was his, in another place he saith, “ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him ;” and, therefore, he desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, that so he might have the full fruition of him, and enjoy the nearest communion with him. What is the reason that children tremble to come into the presence of their father, but because they are afraid to be beaten, thinking their father is displeased with them ? If they knew that he were satisfied for all the faults that they had done, they would come cheerfully into his presence ; even so a person will never come cheerfully into the presence of the Lord, till he knows he is pleased with him, and that his iniquities (that make variance) are taken away and laid upon Christ. This is joy unspeakable and glorious!

8. The Lord hath laid the iniquities of his people upon Christ, that they may be able to serve the Lord more sincerely and freely, and more uninterruptedly and cheerfully.

(1.) The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that we might serve him with more sincerity : men commonly think the consideration of this to be the highway to make men careless in serving God ; but there is no better way in the world to draw men’s spirits forth, unto upright, sincere, and single-hearted service, than this. You know this principle is grounded in the hearts of all men, “ Charity begins at home ;” every man seeks to serve

himself first, and then, at leisure, he will serve another. As long as you apprehend your own turn is not yet served, your care shall be to serve yourselves; there will be no service done to God; he shall have none of you, but so far as therein you may serve yourselves: God must wait till your own turns be served. As for example, suppose you fast, pray, and mourn, or do any other religious service: if you apprehend your own turns are not yet served, there will be altogether a selfishness in the performance of these duties; selfish ends and motives shall be the loadstones, and they shall draw up your spirits in them; when you labour by fasting, prayer, and seeking the Lord, to prevail with him to take away his displeasure and wrath, and such judgments that are upon us, or hang over our heads, and to procure such good unto us, do you serve God or no? Do you not serve yourselves? Nay, you serve not God, but yourselves; when only yourselves put you upon the performance of the duty.

But you will say, My sins trouble me, I must fast and pray to get them pardoned; except I repent, mourn, and humble myself, I shall die in them; therefore I must repent, mourn, and do this and that to put away sins "before I am gone from hence, and be no more seen;" that I may have my discharge from them while I live here.

I answer, beloved, it is true, that as long as men think that their sins are upon themselves, they cannot be at rest, but still the consideration of them must needs draw them out on these services, till some way be sought to clear themselves of them. Where is now that sincerity and singleness of heart, that a man ought to have, in the service of the Lord? If he could but once be resolved of this thing, that all this business is already dispatched to his hands, then all this selfishness would quickly die; if he could but once receive this, that Christ hath so disposed of all his sins, and made an end of all transgression, that there need not be tears, prayers, fastings, and mournings, to cleanse it away; then the doing of duties, for this end, would quickly end; then your end in them will be the glorifying of God; you would serve him sincerely, and see that your prayers, tears, fastings, and performances, were not appointed to rob him of his service, by serving yourselves, and Christ of his glory, by putting your services in the place of his, which only taketh away sin; but only to glorify God, and to shew forth his goodness,

from whom we expect these things, and to make use of them only as ordinances, wherein the Lord hath promised to manifest himself to us: but while men eye themselves, and their own good, in duties, they are their own servants; they cannot be said to serve God in them; but, when a man knoweth that the Lord hath perfectly saved him from his sins, he is for God's glory, and his eye is upon that in all he doth; then he is the Lord's servant, and not his own, as saith the apostle, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 8.

If, in duties, there be self-ends, and bye-respects, you only live to yourselves, not to God, at all, in them. Now, you would never live to yourselves, if you did but see all finished by Christ, that there can be nothing added to what he hath done for your perfect good and happiness; you would then mind nothing else, but to set forth the glory of that grace that hath so freely saved you; and shew unto the world, that you are the servants of the Lord, and at his beck, and that you are directly for him in all you do; it is only this that puts men upon sincere service.

(2.) The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that we might serve him more uninterruptedly. What is it which causeth men to make so many stops in performance of duties? One while the soul is upon the wing in it, another while it is like a stock. The ground is this; one while he is persuaded his iniquities are forgiven him, and this makes him run on amain; another time he is in fears and doubts, his spirit is troubled: he fears his sins lie still upon him, and that he shall be called to account for them; he looks upon God as wrathful and displeased with him for them; now he is bound up, he cannot stir one foot; but because he conceives God frowns upon him, he dares not come near him. Now, beloved, what an interruption is here in duty, while it goes thus with him? but, if he had this assurance, that all his iniquities are laid upon Christ, and he discharged for ever, he would go on without let or stop at all; then, though sin be committed through infirmity, yet, if he be once persuaded of this, that God will not charge it; and though he be under afflictions yet he fears no punishment! nor can affliction come upon him, as the desert of sin, seeing he knows it was all laid upon Christ; then he goeth on constantly and cheerfully; for he that hath Christ once,

hath him as a buckler to bear off indignation ; though he commits such and such a sin, he lies upon Christ as such, that can defend off every blow, that none of this sin, or the desert of it, wounds and hurts him ; so that he shall be as able to work, in duties, as ever he was before sin was committed ; he is strong and active, and ready to all that God calls him unto, as before. So far as he can find every stroke of God, for his sins, did light upon Christ, so far he shall be fresh, run, and make haste ; and hence it comes to pass, that “ they that trust in the Lord, shall mount upon wings like eagles, shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint ;” because there is nothing now remains to tire and weary them, to wound, and take off their spirits and their strength.

(3.) The consideration of iniquity being laid upon Christ, enlarges the spirit in service ; he that hath the strength of the Lord to serve by, can serve without fear ; he is more able, and doth things far better than he that hath his own strength only. If Christ be yours, God is yours, all things are yours, and his power yours, engaged to your help. Oh ! then, what a mighty strength must you have, in comparison of those who walk in their own, and do duty by it ! But, if you believe not that your iniquities are laid upon Christ, you cannot be resolved that he is yours ; and then you cannot go forth in his strength ; and then how weak must you needs be in all your services, when you have but your own strength to carry you on ! No Spirit, God, nor Christ to assist you ! But, when you have him, his Spirit, and power, how mightily shall your spirits be eased in prayer*, and in all duties of religion ! how strong are you in the Lord, and the power of his might, to resist the devil and all temptations ! But, if the strength of Christ be wanting, alas ! how exceeding weak are we to contend against such mighty enemies we are continually exercised with ! how unable to resist the least temptation ! Now, if your iniquities be laid upon Christ, then his strength is yours, and, through that interest you have in him, you may boldly and cheerfully go on in the power of his might.

9. The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that at the appointed time of the Father, the people of the Lord might enjoy the promised inheritance. Beloved, there is no soul under heaven shall see it ; there is no entrance into the heaven

* Rom. viii, 26.

Jerusalem, the inheritance of the saints in light, but by laying our iniquities upon Christ: this is a certain truth; heaven and earth shall pass away, before it shall be nullified; "No unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," Rev. xxi. 27.

Beloved, you must not expect to live a moment in this world, wherein some sin will not be committed by you; and what can take it away, but its being laid upon Christ? Let me tell you, that if God had not laid our iniquities upon Christ, never a soul had entered into heaven; none could have confidence at death, that they should enter there; for there is no refuge to fly to, no hope of drawing near to the everlasting kingdom, till the Lord Jesus Christ cleanse you thoroughly from all sin and filthiness, and so you appear before God perfect in holiness; it is his white raiment that makes persons worthy to walk with him in light; wherefore the Lord counsels the church of Laodicea, to buy of him white raiment, that her nakedness might not appear in the sight of God himself. It is true indeed, the Lord is pleased to make mention of the good things that his people have done, at the day of judgment; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," Mat. xxv. 34, 35. But observe, not any of all this gives entrance into everlasting glory, no, not in any one clause: though he makes mention of what good things the people of God did here in the world, yet this kingdom is not attributed unto that good, no, not so much as prepared for it; for, before you had done any good at all, the kingdom was prepared, not for the good you should do, but of the Father's good will and pleasure, from the beginning; before ever thou wast born, and couldest do any thing, he provided a mansion for thee, only out of mere grace and loving-kindness: now, beloved, all this considered, should stir you up to cry out as the martyr did, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

That this may be your experience, forget every thing that seems worthy in you, or done by you; and let all your triumphing and glorying be in the free grace of God, in Christ, and look upon yourselves only in that, and nothing else; and all things coming to you, receive as flowing from that fountain only: and if you have more ability than others in doing, let it not come into your thoughts as an inducement to think better of

yourselves, as if you were more accepted of God, or pleasing in his sight. Are you sinful, in respect of the prevalency of corruptions? Are the temptations of Satan mighty? Think not that you are worse, or less than others; for iniquity shall not part * Christ and thee, if thou be once joined to him. Be not discouraged, Christ is more ready to receive thee than thou art to fly to him; come to him therefore, and cast your conditions upon him; for the greatest of sinners, usually, are the persons that partake of the greatest mercies: "Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven," while the zealots and Pharisees are shut out. If you once be made to close with the Lord, in the freeness of his grace, and cast your souls upon this rock of your salvation, the Lord Christ, you are past all danger; cast thy soul therefore upon him; he himself shall miscarry, when thy soul shall miscarry that is committed unto him.

SERMON XXVIII.

CHRIST IS OURS BEFORE WE HAVE GRACIOUS
QUALIFICATIONS.

ISAIAH liii. 6

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

You have heard before, beloved, many notable evangelical truths thrust together in a narrow room, in these few words; the chief mysteries of the gospel being set together as thick as possibly they can stand in this compass.

1. It is iniquity that the Lord hath laid upon Christ. 2. Our iniquity. 3. It was the Lord himself that did it. 4. He hath done it already, it is not now to be done. And, 5. It was laid

* Heb. xiii. 5.

upon Christ, and none other; it was the most marvellous that ever the Lord did, that he should not only wound him sin, but make him sin itself; and indeed, he could not well compass his own great ends, except he had laid it upon him; and all the world would have sunk under it, save Christ only; had God laid the creature as a foundation to bear the weight of sin, it would have been dashed to pieces under it; and then the word of God must have fallen to the ground; he should but have built castles in the air, to lay the weight of sin upon the creature; therefore he must have a rock, a foundation of stone, that let the weight be what it will, it may be able to bear it; and that for all those *nine* ends which we have formerly insisted upon, but shall now forbear to mention.

There yet remains *one* considerable, and remarkable truth, and that which indeed those, whose spirits are any whit enlightened, thirst most to be resolved and satisfied in; and that is, whose iniquities they are, that the Lord hath laid upon Christ.

All this while, you will say, here is but a general discourse of the iniquities of men being laid upon Christ; what is that to me? Many men's iniquities may be laid upon him, and I never the better, if mine be not, as well as others. When a reprieve comes to a gaol, what is this to such, or such a thief that hath no interest in it? he dies as if there were none at all: so people's spirits who out of self-love, hearing of a gracious grant, look what share they have in it, are presently asking, as the disciples in another case, "Is it I? or, Is it I?" Are mine iniquities laid upon Christ? Now this text will give us some hint, whereby men may know they have a share in this matter. I know this is commonly the greatest out-cry in the world; I fear this is not my case, that my iniquities are all laid upon Christ; therefore, beloved, I think it would be labour well worth the time, if it were possible, to clear to particular persons, how they might conclude to themselves from this text; for here may be gathered a strong conclusion of their own portion in this grant or grace. I observe, beloved, that though it be the greatest query any heart (once made sensible of its own condition) can make, how they may know their own interest in this grace of God? Yet there is nothing wherein persons remain so unsettled, as in this question; how may I be assured my part lies here? The apostle speaks of the "Full assurance of faith," and of "coming to the throne

of grace with boldness ;” I am afraid that gross heart-clogging doctrine, that men cannot be assured of their own salvation, is too much to be found in the world ; not one man among a thousand can say, all my iniquities are laid upon Christ ; it will be therefore an admirable piece of work, most acceptable to the church and children of God, and a thing bringing most glory to God, and comfort to his people, to undeceive them ; who by reason of mistaking the way of their own interest, after a long labour after it, are further to seek of the knowledge of it, than when they first began.

As I conceive, that whereat so many stumble, when they first enter into this great case, whether they have interest in this grace, or not, lieth in the trial of their estate ; they lay down a ground work, supposing it to be undeniable, which indeed is a deceiving of persons in their search ; namely, that there must be found in them, who have propriety in this grace by Christ, some previous dispositions and qualifications of spirit, as integrity, sound repentance, conversion, and other fruits of sanctification : now they lay it down for a position with themselves, that till they can find themselves sanctified, and those graces of sanctification, by which they try themselves, in themselves, they conclude, none of this grace of Christ belongs to them ; so that they fall upon some graces, such as they cull out to themselves, and then they try whether they have them in them, and what proportion they find of them in them ; and if their hearts do not answer to these they have set before them, they presently conclude, that no grace of Christ belongs to them.

Now, beloved, my heart’s desire is this, that in this great business, wherein so great comfort of God’s people consists, men may be built upon clear and proper grounds : that so they being undeceived, may find out the way which the Lord useth whenever he giveth satisfaction to his people, of their interest in Christ.

You may find it out, as the Lord hath chalked it out to you ; and this, I am sure, a man may dare to lay hold upon his own proper portion in this grace and grant of the Lord, not only whensoever the Lord is pleased to hold it out, but also upon those terms he holds it out, if you will call them so : sure, I say, as the conditions are, by which they may claim interest in Christ, those being granted and found, the soul may close with the grace of

God: now all the difficulty lieth in this, whether the Lord propounds to men, that there shall be no part in Christ, nor grace by him, till they find their spirits, souls, and bodies, sanctified throughout; or whether the Lord holds out the grant of pardon of sin, without such previous qualifications, or no; there lieth the greatest scruple in this very particular.

I doubt not but to ingenuous spirits, I shall make it clear, that the grace of laying iniquity upon Christ, is applicable by forgiveness of sins, to persons before ever there be the least measure of sanctification in works at all; and being applied by the Lord's own grant, there may be safety and security in applying the same by faith, without regard, or respect to sanctification, in any measure whatsoever.

But you will say, peradventure, the text seems to make against it, rather than for it; for it saith, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all:" from whence you will argue thus; *us* doth take in the prophet himself, with the rest of whom he spake; and the prophet was renewed and sanctified when he spake thus, and so may all the rest be, of whom he spake; and that, therefore, this grace of laying iniquity upon Christ, is applied unto persons when they are sanctified.

For answer to this, though the prophet speaks of himself as one interested in this; yet it will be clear, (whether he were sanctified, or no, it is not material) that he had no reference to himself as a sanctified person; namely, that this grace was applied to him as such.

That this may be clear to you, note the foregoing words; there you see, that he is so far from having regard to sanctification of spirit, before laying of iniquities upon Christ, that he takes into consideration no other condition in the world, but the most wretched, sinful, and forlorn estate, creatures can be brought into: mark the words well, "All we (there he brings in himself) like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all."

Now the question is, whose iniquities they are, that are laid upon Christ; the text saith, "The iniquities of us:" Who are the *us*? It is "us, that like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way:" now what is it for sheep to go astray? Sheep, you know, are then straggling, when they are from their shepherd; it is not being now in one pasture, and

HAVE GRACIOUS QUALIFICATIONS.

then in another, that argues a sheep's going astray ; shepherd be with them in this pasture now, and in another to-morrow, still they are not gone astray. Sheep are then astray, when they are from their shepherd, and those pastures that he hath appointed for them : so that for men to go astray, is to go from God their shepherd ; " The Lord is my shepherd," saith David, in Psal. xxiii. 1. Mark now, the iniquities of these persons are laid upon Christ, who strayed in that they departed from the living God ; now what renewed qualifications can be possibly imagined to be in a man, that is departed from God ? " My people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters," Jer. ii. 13. There is a departing from God, a great evil it is indeed ; and you shall see there is an impossibility of believing when there is such a departing from the living God : " Take heed, (saith the apostle,) lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. It is most certainly true, there is an evil heart of unbelief, while there is a departing from God. Faith, you know, is the first of all gifts God bestows upon a soul, and all other graces, as they call them, follow that faith that Christ gives to men ; so that, if there be not a believing, there can be no graces of sanctification at all. But while men are departing from the living God, there remains in them an evil heart of unbelief ; and yet though there be a departing from God, and straying like lost sheep, the iniquities of these persons, considered as departed from God, are laid upon Christ. " We turned every one to his own way : " here he sets out fully the self-willedness, and extravagancies of persons ; what is it for a man to turn to his own way, but to proceed on, in his purpose alone, without regard to what God saith to him ? The Israelites, when they lived without a king, " Every man did that which seemed good in his own eyes." This then is the true meaning of the words, " turned to his own way," that men do what is good in their own eyes ; and yet it is the iniquities of these men, that have thus turned to their own ways, which the Lord hath laid upon Christ.

From whence I lay down this conclusion, that this grace of the Lord's laying of iniquity upon Christ, is certainly applied unto persons, even while they are departed from the living God, are lost sheep, are turned every one to their own ways, before they have amended them.

And because this is a truth that is so hardly received in the world, seeming to give such way to looseness, as some most unjustly and wickedly calumniate the truth; seeing it finds so little favour, though it contains so many great and inestimable comforts; I shall endeavour, through the Spirit of Christ, to bring such manifest scriptures, and so undeniable, to clear the truth of it, that he must fight against his own knowledge that opposeth it; namely, that the laying of iniquity of any person upon Christ, is before they can find the least degree of gracious qualifications, or sanctification wrought in them: and therefore it is a most fearful injury unto a man's self, and a forsaking a man's own mercy, directly to conclude, that there is no grace for me, because I cannot find such and such things in me, as universal obedience, sanctification, and the like.

You shall plainly see when grace is applied unto persons, and of what conditions, by that of the Psalmist, *Psa. lxxiii. 18*, "Thou hast ascended up on high, (it is spoken of Christ, for so the apostle explains it) thou hast led captivity captive, and hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious;" mark well, "even for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them;" who is that *them? the rebellious*; how comes the Lord God to dwell amongst them? "Thou hast received gifts for them." But, beloved, this you must know, that there is no evil dwells with God; he stands fully off, and separate from all iniquity; "Your iniquities," saith the prophet, "separate between you and your God:" there must be a taking away of iniquity, before there can be a receiving graciously as you have it in *Hosea xiv. 2, 3*. As long as there is iniquity to be charged upon any person, there is no receiving graciously; but the Lord stands afar off, there is no dwelling of God with wickedness; therefore, seeing he cannot dwell with men where iniquity is, Christ received gifts for men, that he might dwell among the rebellious. Now this seems to be a paradox and indeed all the doctrines of the gospel are paradoxes to carnal men. How can these words stand together, that the Lord dwells among rebellious persons, and yet cannot dwell with wickedness? Is there not wickedness in rebellion? I answer, beloved, there is wickedness in rebellion, in the nature of it; but, saith the text, "Thou hast received gifts, that the Lord God may dwell among such rebellious ones:" as much as to

say, though this, or that person, actually rebel from time to time, yet for all this, Christ hath so received gifts of the Father, that the loathsomeness and hatefulness of this rebellion is laid upon the back of Christ; he bears the sin, as well as the blame and shame of that iniquity and rebellion: so that though this or that person do act it, yet all the hatefulness thereof is laid upon Christ, and God satisfied himself in him; and that is the only reason why it comes to pass that God can dwell with them that act the thing, because all the filthiness and hatefulness of it is transacted from them upon Christ*. But for the person himself, you see plainly, he is considered here in no other condition, but as an actor of rebellion itself; and the Lord is come to dwell with him, even while he is a rebellious person. Now I would fain know, what previous qualification, renovation, and sanctification, can possibly be supposed, or imagined, in persons considered only as rebels; for here persons are considered under no other notion. The Holy Ghost doth not say, that the Lord takes rebellious persons, and fits, and prepares them by sanctification, and then, when they are fitted, he will come and dwell with them; but even then, without any intermission, even while they are rebellious, Christ hath received gifts for them, that the Lord God may dwell among them.

And if this be not clear enough, look into that golden passage, never enough to be repeated and resorted unto, for the sweetness lying in it, namely, Ezek. xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10; consider there, I pray you, of what case or condition the Lord speaks of

* That the filth of sin should be transferred from men, and laid on Christ, is by many objected to; but is no other than what has been affirmed by divines, ancient and modern. Gregory of Nyssa, speaking of Christ, says, Vol. I. p. 491, "having transferred to himself, *τον των εμων αμαρτιων ρυπον*, the filth of my sins, he imparted to me his own purity." And in p. 767, "The pure and harmless one took upon him, or received, *τον της ανθρωπινης φύσεως ρυπον*, the filth of human nature." And again Vol. II. p. 785, "Purity was *εν τω ημετερω ρυτω*, in our filth, but the filth did not touch that purity. Calvin, on John xix. 17, has these words, after having observed that Christ was made sin, and a curse for us, adds, "That he was led without the city, that he might take with him out of the way *sordes nostras quæ illi impositæ erant*, our filth which was laid upon him.—No otherwise could the guilt of all our sins be abolished, but by the Son of God being made filth for us; we see him forced into an execrable place, *quasi omni scelerum congerie pollutum*, as if defiled with the whole mass of sins, that he might then appear accursed before God and men." Piscator, on Luke ii. 21, remarks, that the law of purification was observed by Mary, to teach us, "That, Christ, pure and undefiled in his own nature, *sortes nostrorum peccatorum in sese recepisse*, took upon himself the filth of our sins, that he might wash them away in his own blood." So Joshua, the high priest, a type of Christ, is represented as clothed with filthy garments; nor can sin and filth be separated Zech. iii. 3. See my *Truth Defended*, p. 42—53.

that people; "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother was an Hittite, and in the day of thy nativity thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed with water to supple thee," &c. "no eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee, and thou wast in thy blood:" mark what kind of filthiness the Lord expresseth this to be, namely, such as no eye could pity the person that was defiled with it, to do any of these things to it; his filthiness was such that it made all the world to abhor him, as not so much as to come near, and do any good to him. Here was his estate; now what did the Lord do in that condition? "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee live:" not when I saw thee washed from thy blood, cleansed and fitted for me by repentance, and newness of life, &c. then I had pity on thee; no, but when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, then said I unto thee, live; there was not the least distance of time between the pollution, and the life the Lord communicated.

But some will say, where the Lord gives sanctification, there he gives life; and then he gives Christ, and fixeth his love, doth he not?

No, saith the prophet, but "the time of thy blood, was the time of my love." And what doth God do in this time? "I spread my skirt over thee," even then in the time of blood; for what need were there of a skirt to cover, if there were no filthiness to be covered? So that you see the time of love was a time of blood. He doth not take away this blood by sanctification, and new qualifications and dispositions; but he takes it away from his own sight and charge first; and this he calls the spreading of a skirt over this person thus polluted. And is this all? No, he goeth further; "I spread my skirt over thee, and I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee:" mark how completely a person is possessed of all the privileges of Christ, the very covenant itself established upon him, and God is become his own; and all this in the time of blood. And how doth it appear, that he is actually and really become God's own, even at this time? From these words; "Thy time was the time of love;" but it may be out of doubt, if you mark what follows, that there is no ground for men to think there should be sanctification when God first enters into covenant; "I swore unto thee and thou becamest mine; then washed I thee with water, and

thoroughly washed away thy blood :” what, when there was something going before of sanctification, some previous qualification? No, no, but there was first entering into covenant, and God’s becoming their God, and then washing with water ; with what water, the water of sanctification, or justification? You will say, it may be, (as is generally conceived) of justification ; to me it seems to be the washing of regeneration by the blood of Christ ; for saith the text, “ I washed thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood :” now we know that the best sanctification in the world doth not perfectly cleanse a person, therefore it must be washing of justification ; but suppose it be the washing of sanctification, it is most plain that this is a fruit of a person’s interest in Christ, and follows his being actually in him, and doth not go before : “ Then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood,” and “ then I put ornaments upon thee,” as it follows ; that is, after I had sworn unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee.

To clear this a little further to you, look into Isaiah xlii. 6, and you shall plainly see, that a person hath not only part in Christ, but possession of him, and all his privileges, by imputation, before there be the least measure of sanctification ; the words are these ; “ I will give thee for a covenant to the people, and a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, and to bring the prisoners out of prison :” here is a deed of gift ; Here you see Christ is made over to be the covenant of persons, even the covenant of God’s giving over himself ; and what is that covenant ? “ I will be their God, and they shall be my people ; and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more :” this is the substance of the covenant ; Christ is this covenant, and he himself is given over to the elect ; as much as to say, in Christ I will become their God : in him I will remember their sins no more ; this have I given in him to them : but when doth the Lord pass over this to his people ? When they are first renewed ? When they first believe ? Have they knowledge of God, and of themselves, before he makes this deed of gift over to them ? Mark what follows, you shall see all the qualifications of sanctification must not only follow Christ given, but they are the very work of Christ himself, after he is given ; “ I will give thee for a covenant to open the blind eyes :” you see that the opening of the blind eyes of sinners, and the bringing of prisoners out of prison,

is the main end for which Christ was given by God to be a covenant to the people; and Christ himself is the means by which that end must be compassed.

Now, you know, beloved, that though the end of things be first in intention, yet it is the last in execution; this being the end for which Christ was given, to open blind eyes; and he, as the covenant, being the means by which they should be opened; it must follow, that the means must be existing, and present, to do the thing, before the thing can be done by them. If a workman be to build a house, he must be prepared before the house can be built by him; you cannot build a house, and the workman come afterwards; but he comes first, and then he builds the house. It is the Lord sanctifies people, opens their eyes, unshackles them, and brings them out of the bonds of sin, to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint, in the way of God's commandments; but God doth not renew and sanctify his people, and then give Christ to them, being sanctified; but he gives Christ, and he being given, and present first, then he sanctifies them.

What qualifications can you find in blind and shackled persons; bound up under the bonds of Satan, even dead in trespasses; seeing the first work that the Lord works upon any person, is to open the eyes to see him, and themselves? Now Christ must be present, because he is given to do the thing, before it can be done; all the world cannot do it without him, whether it be the opening of the eye of faith, or knowledge: if it be the eye of faith, Christ is said to be "the author and finisher" of it; and he must come and open the eyes of sinners to believe, before they can believe: if it be the eye of knowledge, we "must all be taught of God," as we are in covenant with him, before ever we shall come to know God; for that is one part of his covenant, when he gives himself to be the God of his people, and when he will remember their sins no more.

Our Saviour speaks as plainly himself as all the texts in scripture can speak, when he would directly point out, to the Jews, for whom he died and became sin; "I came to save that which was lost." What qualifications, I pray you, can you find in a lost person? He may be lost, you will say, but he may be renewed and sanctified for all that? No, saith he, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:" the meaning

s, if a man will be holy, righteous, and sanctified, and will come to me afterwards; I came not to call such as are righteous already, but such as are not, even sinners. The apostle speaks the same in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters to the Romans; namely, that the Lord gives Christ, and a portion in him, without any regard in the world to any thing that a man doth. In the latter end of the 3d chapter, he disputed, at large, against all manner of works added to, or present with, a person to be justified, and then draws to a peremptory conclusion; "Therefore I conclude, that a person is justified without the deeds of the law;" whereby, he doth not only exclude any righteousness of ours, from having any operative power to concur in the laying of iniquity upon Christ, but excludes all manner of works men can do, to be present, and existent in persons, when God justifies them: he doth not mean only that he is justified without the concurrence of them to justification, but even without the being of them, and presence, in the person so to be justified; there is nothing to be done by man as a preparation to his justification. This he makes more plain in the next verse; he tells us there, that the circumcised and uncircumcised are both one with God in justifying them: it is no matter to him what they be, he justifieth the uncircumcision as well as the circumcision.

But you will say, What is it for a person to be considered as uncircumcised? Circumcision, you know, was the first act of God manifesting himself to the people of the Jews, by which he invited them into his church; and a person, uncircumcised, is considered as altogether in the estate in which he was born by nature. Now, if circumcision itself be not requisite to justification, then, certainly, there is no foregoing work to come in, this being the first of all that is done: but the apostle makes it more plain in the beginning of the 4th chapter; for he tells us expressly, "If a man be justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God;" and again, "If it be of works, the reward is not of grace, but of debt." You, whoever you are, that require previous works of sanctification, or any thing else, to come and shew itself in you, so that you may apply the justification of Christ to you; do you not now bring in works, as that which must give you rest? If you bring them in to have such efficacy in them, that they must be there, or you can have no justification; is not here justification by works, and must you

not account it as a debt? When I am thus and thus qualified, then Christ must be mine; 's not there a bringing something to God, that you may have your interest sealed? Is not there a bringing of works to him, to commend you to him?

But observe the words following, speaking more than they that go before; "Not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly:" mark, this is that which the apostle beats at so much; namely, to shew the dispositions and qualifications of men in their justification: God, saith he, "justifieth the ungodly," not as they are working men, but as they are ungodly: whoever thou art that wilt be a working person, and, as thou art one, wilt apply thy justification, know this, the apostle saith it is, "Not to him that worketh." Whosoever it be that will apply his justification, interest in Christ, and pardon of sin aright, must look upon himself, not as a working, but as an ungodly person; then he shall apply it to himself as God applies it: God applies it to the ungodly: and if thou wilt apply it as he applies it, and no otherwise, thou must apply it to a person considered as such, and no otherwise.

I will establish this truth somewhat further, for I know it is flung at, and will find great opposition in the world. Look into Rom. v. 6, 8, 10; you shall there see it expressly delivered by the apostle, who strikes it stark dead; namely, that holding the contrary to this, that we are justified, considered as ungodly, is absolutely false; "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Where are your qualifications while there is no strength? these stand in performances, in being able to do this and that; but men are considered here, as being without strength, and Christ died for them as such; and not only so, but as they were ungodly and sinners; "If while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" Christ considered us as sinners, in the condition of sin, and in no other; and, in this consideration, laid down his life. Nay, in ver. 10th, he speaks more to the purpose: in the former but privately, being only considered as ungodly, that is, persons void of godliness; but here, positively, as they were enemies; so saith he, "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son:" mark this place, beloved, I dare be bold to say, this text shall be able to answer all the objections of thy heart, if thou hast but a heart given thee, so much as to look after Christ, to have

him if thou mightest; even all that thy heart can raise against thee, from the consideration of thy own vileness or wickedness of heart and life, whatsoever it be; “While we were enemies,” &c. What qualifications can this person have, considered in no other condition but this, namely, in a state of enmity, of fighting against God? Whoever thou art, doth thy heart tell thee, that, when the word of God comes home to thee, thou flyest in the face of the minister, yea, of God himself, thy heart rising against him. Yet, notwithstanding all this, here may be reconciliation for thee. Yea, you will say, when once tamed: no, saith the text, “While we were enemies we were *actually* reconciled;” not were reconcilable, or capable of reconciliation, or when amended, and had laid down our weapons, we should be reconciled; but in the state of enmity we were reconciled.

Now put all these together, and they amount to thus much, and that is enough. Wouldst thou know that thou art interested in this privilege and grace, of laying iniquity upon Christ? What hinders thee, that thou canst not take thy share and portion in it? Oh! thou sayest, thou art a wicked wretch, thou hast no heart to any godliness in the world; suppose this to be true, I say, even while thou art going astray, and turnest to thy own ways, thy iniquities are laid on Christ; you will say, this cannot be surely. Beloved, I answer, I would fain know what it is that can make void the truth of it; there is no scripture can contradict what I have said, except it contradicts itself, which is impossible it should.

But all this while you will say, this does not satisfy me, that I am one of them, that shall have share in this grace, of having my iniquities laid upon Christ; for there are many ungodly persons that yet never had any part in Christ, nor never shall.

Beloved, let me tell you, the secrets of the Lord are with himself; only the names of particular persons are written in the book of life; but they are not written in the word, and works of the law: but what hinders, but that thou mayest have as good a portion in him, as heart can wish, being considered in thyself merely ungodly? I will put this case: there comes forth an act of a general pardon to all thieves and murderers; it is made to all that will come and take their share; now I ask this question, suppose a person be a thief, and a traitor, what need his name in particular be mentioned in this pardon? may he not assume

as certainly his own particular interest in that general grant, as if he were specified by name? All thieves that will, may come in, as well as if their names were written particularly in the proclamation. Again, are not the words of Christ sufficient for the satisfaction of any, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," as if his name in particular were set down. If all thieves, without exception, have a pardon tendered, and I know I am a thief, this is enough for me; I may know, I may be sure, that I am therein pardoned as well as any other. Beloved, the Lord's grant of laying iniquity upon Christ, is as much as a grant of a general pardon to all thieves and traitors, and as freely exhibited as that can be; for it runs in this tenor, "Every one that will, let him come, and take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Now hath the Lord given thee a heart to come, that thou wouldst fain have Christ if thou durst, fain thou wouldst, that all thy iniquities should be taken from thee to be laid upon him. Beloved, the Lord saith expressly unto you, "Every one that will, let him come:" have you but a mind to come and take him, your coming and taking is your security; Christ is a liar (with all reverence be it spoken) if he turn off any that come to him; "He that comes to me, I will in no wise cast him off, John vi. 37. Dost thou come to Christ, and doth he cast thee off? He denies himself then; for he saith, "I will in no wise cast thee off:" and thus much may be sufficient to assure thee, that notwithstanding any sinfulness which thou findest in thyself, thou mayst boldly come unto Christ, and **commit** thyself unto him, as to an all-sufficient Saviour.

SERMON XXIX.

INHERENT QUALIFICATIONS ARE DOUBTFUL
EVIDENCES FOR HEAVEN.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

THE iniquity that was laid upon Christ, is the iniquity of *us all*: that is the last point proposed; there are two things mainly considerable in it.

1. Whose iniquities they are that the Lord laid upon Christ.

2. How particular persons may come to know whether their iniquities, in special, are laid on him. The former were dispatched the last day; the iniquities that the Lord laid upon Christ, were not the iniquities of the righteous, but of sinners; the iniquities of such, “Who like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to their own way;” in the former part of the verse; this I have shewed at large, and have abundantly cleared it: there is no sinfulness in which a person stands, can possibly be a bar to the discharge of him, from such sins, and the charging of Christ with them; but I must not dwell upon things I have already delivered.

I come to the second particular; how particular persons may come to know certainly concerning their own estate; whether or no the grace intended, and held out in this text concerns them; and whether the Lord means them in special, when he said, “He laid on Christ the iniquities of us all.” If any man fall upon the trial of a title, he must produce his evidences, that it may be clear; and these must be of that nature, that they are not dubious and litigious; that may rather administer more, and greater controversies, than put an end to the question in hand.

There are many disputes in the world, and the arguments brought to put an end to them, commonly make them greater than before; and it is as certainly true in the present case as

hand. When there arise disputes in the hearts of people, to resolve this question, whether they are discharged of their sins or no ; they produce such and such evidences, and try the strength of them with such eagerness, that the question is farther off from being resolved, than before the dispute began. He that will clear his title to the interest he hath in this grant of God, must make use of those evidences that God hath given for that very purpose ; and they that shall make use of others, will but make a greater controversy in their own spirits, and more doubtfulness than there was before. I know that among tender consciences, there is nothing in the world pursued with so much vehemency of spirit, earnestness and zeal of affection, as to attain to this, namely, to know certainly they have a part and portion in this grace : oh, think they, if we could but be once satisfied of this, that our iniquities were all done away in Christ, we have what our hearts could desire : beloved, it is to be considered, in so great a pursuit, and such earnestness of spirit to attain the end, why there is so little satisfaction to the spirits of men ; scarce one of a thousand that makes the search, whether they have an interest in this grace, can attain to a final resolution ; but, after they have searched, there remains some rub or other, that they are unsatisfied for the time : some mistake certainly there must be, either in the ground, or conclusion, or inference of the dispute ; either they lay down arguments that have no strength in them, or if they have, they do not draw right inferences and conclusions from them. In all resolutions concerning a case of conscience, there is always a Syllogism, a natural one I mean ; for the case still goes thus, he that would be certain that his portion is in this grace, must first take the argument from the word itself ; then he must draw his assumption from what he finds in himself, agreeing with the word, and so deduce his conclusion from them both, after this manner : he that is thus and thus, his sins are forgiven him ; but I am thus and thus, therefore my sins are forgiven me.

Now, beloved, either we lay down a false foundation, or at least one that cannot be cleared ; or else we make a corrupt assumption from thence, so that we cannot gather a certain conclusion.

I conceive, therefore, it might be a welcome business, if it were possible, to draw forth such evidences as are without all

exception : but before this can be done, there must be a taking away of the common mistakes of men ; I shall therefore, beloved, endeavour these two things :

First, To shew where the mistake lieth, that this question is so rarely resolved ; and then shew what it is that will resolve it satisfactorily.

When persons are eager upon the satisfaction of their own spirits, concerning their interest in this grace of pardon and discharge of sin ; I find that usually in the entrance on this trial, and search, they run immediately to some qualifications in themselves, and fruits of sanctification ; which must make up the conclusion for them, or else they will not, they dare not, make their conclusion to their own comfort. I mean briefly and plainly thus ; the common way of people is to try themselves by signs and marks, drawn from their sanctification and performances ; and as these will make up the conclusion they desire, so they sit down satisfied with their condition ; but nothing makes up their conclusion, but premises taken from their sanctification. How litigious and doubtful a course this is to resolve the spirits of men, I doubt not but I shall make very clear to you, by and by, and therein shew how much men are mistaken, and how far wide they are from the conclusion they desire ; while no other premises shall serve the turn, but what their own sanctification, qualifications and dispositions can afford.

But to come more closely to the business, give me leave, beloved, to take into consideration, and so to propose to you the weakness of the most remarkable signs, by which people use to try themselves : I shall pass by those that are of less consequence, and instance in those that are usual, and most pressed upon, as building-marks. For,

1. It is well known that this is one of the most remarkable signs, by which a person must know his portion in the grace of God through Christ, namely, universal obedience : when any man goes to examine, am I a child of God ? Are my sins forgiven ? If they be, then I have universal obedience ; and then follows the search : have I it or no ? If the heart saith, I have, then all is well to it ; if it says no, it is then conceived presumption to conclude a portion in Christ ; this is the common way of trial : how weak this mark of universal obedience is to resolve a soul concerning his portion in the grace of God, I shall make

clear to you ; for certainly it cannot resolve the question as men would have it.

1. There is no person under heaven, believer, or unbeliever, that hath universal obedience ; and therefore if it should be a mark, without which there can be no certainty of interest in Christ, no person under heaven can have assurance of interest in him.

2. I shall make it appear to you, that suppose there be such an universal obedience as men aim at, yet that is not enough to satisfy of interest in Christ.

1. There is no such thing in the heart and practice of man under heaven, as universal obedience, especially taking it as most people do. When men stand upon it, to try themselves by this, what is it ? There is one expression will make it appear, what they mean by it ; for you will find the way of trial runs thus : one leak, think they, is enough to sink a ship ; one dead fly to putrify a whole box of ointment ? one drop of poison, though in a cup of the sweetest wine, to suffocate the life of him that drinks it : now mark their inference from hence ; in case there be one leak in me, this will sink me for ever ; one dead fly in me, this will putrify all good things in me, and if but one drop of poison in me, it will choak me quite. Now, I beseech you, mark, if this be a sign, by which a man can come to know whether he be in Christ ; let me see the man that dares say there is not one leak in him, not one dead fly in the precious box of grace, that he hath in his heart ; not one drop of poison in his wine of obedience ? If there be any of these, where is this universal obedience ? The truth indeed is, universal obedience takes in all particulars ; for universality is nothing else but a concurrence of all particulars met together. Either then there must be a complete obedience to the whole law, without failing in one jot or tittle, or else there is not, there cannot be, universal obedience.

But some will be ready to say, we do not mean by universal obedience, an exact performance of every tittle of the law, for that we know no man can reach unto ; but the mark we try ourselves by, is an universal purpose of heart unto obedience, or the purpose of heart to yield universal obedience ; and this a man must try himself by, and must find in himself, or else he cannot make up this conclusion, that he hath a portion in the grace of God by Christ. If he have a full purpose, and respect of heart,

to all God's commandments; if he can find it so, then it is well; but if he cannot, then all is naught.

Let us take universal obedience in this sense, for a full purpose of heart to obey the whole will of God, though there be not ability to perform every thing whereunto there is such a purpose; if this be the mark you try yourselves by, then I would fain know whether by full purpose of heart, you understand a constant purpose of heart, or else by fits, and at sometimes. If any say, they try themselves by the purpose of their hearts at such and such times, and confess that there is not a constancy of it; then let me tell you, such purposes of heart that are taken notice of at such and such times, cannot be signs of a man's having interest in Christ: you know the wickedest men in the world, have their good moods and resolutions sometimes, and from the heart indeed: take a man upon his sick bed, and tell him of his former course of life, and of God's grace, he will say; if God restore him to his health, he will lead a better life than he hath done; and his heart is not feigned in what he saith; he speaks all this from his heart, and really intends it. Now if a purpose of heart by fits, be a mark and sign of a man's interest in Christ, it may be so to a man that hath no portion in him at all; and so can be no certain mark or evidence to those who desire to try themselves by it.

But if they say this purpose of heart, to yield obedience to all God's commandments, is a constant purpose of heart, and that it is always set toward them: and God can read the inclination of their hearts to him and his service, to be constant, though to perform the same be not present always with them: well, if you mean this, then let me tell you, there is no person under heaven, able to say truly from an unfeigned heart, that he hath a constant purpose and inclination to the whole will of God: and I appeal to the spirits of every one of you, that go this way to work; is there a constant inclination in your spirits to the whole will of God always? What "meaneth then the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen in your ears?" I ask, beloved, whether this stands with such a constant purpose and inclination, so have untoward risings of the heart, repining and murmuring thoughts against many truths, of the will of God revealed? Sometimes you are present in the house of the Lord, attending upon the manifestation of his will; it is his will you should do

so and so ; is there always an inclination of heart to this particular service ? Doth it stand with a constant inclination of heart to it, to be weary of it, to be indisposed to it, and to have contradiction in your spirits against it ? Now whose hearts are not privy to a world of this indisposition, crossness, drawing back, and pulling in the shoulders from such and such services as God calls us out unto ? Take crosses and afflictions, for example, they are the fruits of the love of God ; the Lord hath declared that they shall bring forth “ the peaceable fruits of righteousness,” Heb. xii. 11 ; are your hearts inclined, and are the constant purposes of your spirits to this pleasure of God ? Do you count it “ all joy when ye fall into them ?” as James directs, James i. 2. How comes it to pass then that there should be so much reluctancy and opposition of spirit to the will of God, if the constant purpose and inclination of the heart were towards it ? Now, beloved, mark it well, do but compare this indisposition of the spirit to this will of God, with the disposition of the spirit to it ; you shall find by your own experience mostly, there is a real indisposition, rather than a real affection to the thing : how then can this be called a constant inclination of the heart to the whole will of God, when, in most things, there is an averseness of spirit to it ?

But to take up the business, that it may be without all contradiction : suppose we grant a person hath a constant purpose and inclination of heart to the whole will of God ; nay, reaches the very practice of the will of God, according to that purpose of heart. Suppose upon search and trial of universal obedience, you are able to find, not only that your hearts are to all the commandments of God ; but that you walk in them all even blamelessly. You will say, this is a good mark, a man may rest satisfied with this, *i. e.* conclude thereby that he hath a portion in the grace of God : but give me leave to deal plainly and truly with your spirits ; I must tell you if it be found thus with you, both in respect of purpose and practice, yet this very sign is not sufficient to clear to you, that there is a portion in Christ, in respect of it. For that cannot be a mark to a person that he hath part in Christ that is common to wicked, as well as good men. Can any man say, I know I have eyes to see, and hands that have motion in them, and because I am so, I know I am a child of God ? Do not the wickedest men in the world see with their eyes, and move

with their hands? If this be a mark, why may not they know themselves to be in Christ, as well as a believer? But you will say, the case is not alike, there is no wicked man in the world can attain to universal obedience; if they may in purpose of heart, yet certainly not in practice: to understand the truth of this, look in Phil. iii. 6, where you shall find the apostle makes a narration of the condition of his life while he was a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the church of God, and the frame of it, after he was called home to Christ. In the description of his condition, he tells us what sect he was of, namely, a Pharisee, men that were the most strict and austere of all others; and among other things, saith he, "Concerning zeal, I persecuted the church of God, and touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless;" that is it I would have you observe, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless.

Now I would fain know of any man, what difference there is between that universal obedience to the whole will of God, which they look after, and a blamelessness of life touching the law. He that sins, and fails over and over again, of knowledge, is this man a blameless man in his life? Certainly, beloved, the apostle walked exceeding exactly, and he doth not say simply he was blameless as to those among whom he lived; for they perhaps might not judge of righteousness according to the law, but according to their own esteem: but, saith he, "touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless;" that is, a righteousness according to the revealed will of God, in which I was thus blameless: now if this be a mark, or a sign, that a man hath interest in Christ, namely, being righteous in his conversation, then Paul, while a persecutor of the church, had a mark and sign that he was in Christ: but consider, though he clears himself, as a man walking blamelessly before his conversion; yet he was so far from thinking this blamelessness according to the righteousness of the law, to be a sign of his interest in Christ, that he abhors it, is ashamed of it, and accounts it very dung. It is true, while he was in his Pharisaism, he accounted this blamelessness of his according to the law his exceeding gain; oh, thought he, this will bear me out, it shall certainly be well with me; herein he accounted it gain: "But, (saith he,) that which was gain to me, I accounted loss:" observe it well, he is so far from making it a mark, or sign of interest in Christ, that he accounts it but

loss. And doubtless, I account all things but dung, that I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness according to the law. Though he found a righteousness according to the law in himself, yet he doth not treasure it up as a precious thing to comfort his heart, and as a certain mark to rest upon; but, and in respect of satisfying it, he counts it as dung, and casts it away, and will not be found in it; but only in the righteousness of God by faith.

How can any man imagine that that should be a mark, that Paul, after conversion, esteemed but as dung? Surely, marks and evidences of interest in Christ, must be of a better price: marks that will bring comfort, may justly be more precious in the eyes of men after conversion, than dung; therefore; for ought I can see, let a man find ever so exact obedience to all the commandments of God, he cannot assure himself, from thence, that he hath portion in Christ.

But some will say, Universal obedience of itself, indeed, is not a sufficient sign; some may go very far in it, and yet come short of christianity, but there must be added to it sincerity, and singleness of heart; if I walk according to the commandments of God: and do it in sincerity and singleness of heart, I may sit down by this as a good mark, and be satisfied therewith.

But I answer, That if sincerity, and singleness of heart, be made a mark and sign of interest in Christ, at last it will fail a person as well as universal obedience: this is strange, you will say; what, is not sincerity, and singleness of heart, a mark of interest in Christ? I answer, no, whosoever builds upon it may deceive himself; I will make it good thus,

1. He that deals ingenuously with his own spirit, shall find that there is not this sincerity in his heart that he builds upon.

2. If he have this sincerity, it is not enough to give him such a certain conclusion of the goodness of his estate, that it will not fail.

1. No man under heaven can find that sincerity, in his heart, that may comfort him. How will that appear? I answer, he that will try himself by sincerity, and singleness of heart, must understand what it is, or else he will try himself by that which he knows not; and there will be a trying of a hidden thing, by that which is more hidden. You must know, then, what sincerity is, before it can speak peace to you upon trial: now, how will you.

know what it is? Mark how the apostle makes it clear in Eph. vi. 5, 6, speaking there of servants obeying their masters, he counsels them to obey them, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of hearts, as unto Christ." Well, from this passage I conclude, singleness of heart is such a disposition of spirit, as that whatsoever we do in word or deed, we do it as to Christ, or we do it for the Lord's sake. So far as we do any thing, and our hearts have bye-ends in them, so far there is a defect of sincerity and singleness of heart; "If thine eye be single, (saith our Saviour,) thy whole body is full of light:" singleness of eyes there, is opposite to squint-eyes. A squint-eye looks two ways at once; a single-eye looks fore-right, and is pitched only upon such an object; it doth not look upon divers things together, distant each from other, much less contrary one to the other. A single heart doth what it doth for the Lord's sake, and to the Lord himself: now, if this be sincerity, to have the Lord always in our eyes, in what we do, where is that sincerity of heart that may speak peace and comfort to the spirits of men? Beloved, look into your ordinary practice, whether it be so in your exercises of religion, or works of justice and mercy, do you all for and to the Lord? When you live, do you live to the Lord? When you eat and drink, do you all to his glory? Is there not much self mixed in your performances? When you pray, what is the loadstone in your prayers? What is that which makes you pray? Such an exigence puts you on it, preservation from danger, therefore you cry mightily: for you say, If the Lord help not, you perish. Here is praying for a man's self, not to glorify God, or, at least, more praying for one, than the other. Again, if in times of trouble and war, the clouds are great, and ready to break; and, therefore we sigh, mourn, fast, and weep, what is the eye upon all this while? upon self altogether, or for the most part, that we may escape this wrath, that vengeance, and the other affliction; that we may be delivered from that mischief, and this growing evil: now these are the great things in our eye in what we do; all this while, now, do we this as unto the Lord, or for the Lord at all? It was his complaint against the Jews, when they fasted and took a great deal of pains, "Have ye fasted at all unto me?" No, beloved, they fasted unto themselves; so, do you fast at all to the Lord when you fast? And is the Lord altogether the end of your fasting? Is not yourself the

main thing you aim at in it? How can this stand with singleness of heart to him, when he is neglected, and a man's self is altogether in his eye in what he doth? where is that sincerity and singleness of heart, where there is so much self in all that is performed?

But to come more close: suppose this sincerity be to be found, and your hearts, upon search, will tell you, that you have been to the Lord, and for his sake, in what you have done; God and his glory have been the sensible loadstone that have drawn you forth to this and that employment; yet, for all this, such sincerity is no mark, or sign, by which you ought to conclude your portion and interest in Christ. How will you make that good? will some say. Look into Rom. x. 1, 2, 3, you shall see it is as clear as the day, that this sincerity, or doing things for the Lord's sake, is not a mark by which persons can conclude a portion in Christ; nay, more, it is a qualification that those, that are enemies of Christ, have had in a great measure in themselves; and can that be a mark of my being a child of God, and a member of Christ, that may be found in an enemy to him? Mark the words, the apostle, (speaking there of his brethren the Jews) saith, "That his heart's desire and prayer to God was, that they might be saved;" and, withal, "bears them record that they have a zeal of God;" there was a sincerity aiming not at bye-ends, but at the glory of God. And, further, mark wherein this was expressed, and about what it was conversant; it was not exercised in a false way, but in obedience to the will of God: "For, (saith he,) they, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God: for Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Observe it well, here is a zeal, that is, an earnestness of spirit, and this zeal was after God; so, then, it was a zeal wherein they sought God and his glory, not in an indirect way, nor in a corrupt way of their own devising; but in the righteousness according to the law of God himself; for so much is intimated when it is said, that "Christ is the end of the law:" and yet, for all this, saith the apostle, though they had this "zeal of God" according to the will of God in his law; they "submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God:" so then there may be a singleness of heart to the Lord, and for his glory, and a walking in obedience to his will revealed in his law, and no portion in Christ, but a withstanding, and not submitting to his righteousness. Men do

but puzzle themselves extremely, while they go about to satisfy their own spirits by such marks and signs, that if they will deal faithfully with themselves, will never resolve the case fully, to give true and grounded rest unto their souls.

One thing more I will commend to you, and that is a mark, the greatest of all, and which seems to have the greatest strength of all others, and that from the testimony of the apostle himself; wherewith many souls are extremely puzzled in examining themselves by, and very much troubled in making up their conclusion.

Surely it is a good mark, (will some say) we may know we are God's children if we love the brethren; for, saith the apostle, (1 John iii. 14,) "We know we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Will you say a man cannot be resolved he is a child of God by this mark?

For an answer to this, First, I shall desire you well to mark the scope of the apostle in that place. In the words before the text, he tells the brethren there, how the world esteemed of them, what account it had of them; "Marvel not, my brethren, though the world hate you:" but, in this verse, he endeavours to comfort them against the disesteem it had of them, and how doth he do it? "We know (saith he,) that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren:" as much as if he had said, whatever the world judgeth of us, our judgment one of another, is, that we are God's children; and the ground of it is this, we perceive one from another, that there is a love one to another; so that it seems plain to me, that the apostle here endeavours to satisfy persons how they are made known one to another, that they are the people of God, not how they are to know themselves; this seems rather to be a mark, how my brother may know me, than by which I should know myself; the text doth not say, by this I may know that I am passed from death to life.

But, let us take it for granted, that every particular person finding the love of the brethren in himself, by this may know himself to be the child of God. You shall find how exceedingly a soul must be puzzled in this way, before it can clear the case, that it belongs to Christ by it.

For if you will try yourself by this, 1. You must know what it is to love the brethren. And, 2. That they are the brethren you love.

1. You must understand what it is to love the brethren: you can never know you love them, till you know what it is to love them; and when you do know it, and examine yourselves by it, and deal faithfully with yourselves, then you will say, oh, what a labyrinth is this I am in! How shall I get out of it! If you will examine yourselves by this love, let the Spirit of God be your teacher and director: in 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. If you will try your hearts by your love to the brethren, bring them to the particulars, the apostle mentions there; and I doubt your hearts will be at a stand many times about them. The apostle expresseth himself (as the word is rendered by our translators in the English bible) by the word *charity*, but the word in the original is *love*; and there he at large describes the nature of love to the brethren, by many particulars that set it out effectually; “Charity, or love, (saith he) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, it doth not behave itself unseemly; charity seeks not her own, thinks not evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: now consider the sum of these things: “love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.” Wherever there is the love of the brethren, there are all these particulars: come now to these in your examination, bring your hearts to these: is there no envying at all towards the brethren? no thinking evil of any of them? no seeking myself or my own good, in my love to them? Is there a bearing of all things for their sakes? Is there no being puffed up, or vaunting above them? Is there no thinking better of myself than of them? This is the love of the brethren, as the apostle plainly declares: and, if you examine yourselves by this love, do you not find those great defects and imperfections, that must be taken away, before you can resolve the case in hand, by this love to them? So that a soul must attain to a mighty high measure of sanctification and victory over itself, before it can reach to this, to say, *I love the brethren*. Now to put yourselves (poor weak things) upon this mark, which is one of the nearest to perfection; except you can make this manifest, you must not dare to take your part in Christ; what is this, but to tie knots to yourselves, whereby you fasten yourselves with fetters of continual doubting?

But, suppose you find all this love in yourselves, you may

not only love the brethren, but you must know they are the brethren whom you love; for if you bear this love to mankind as such, this is no evidence of your being in Christ; for the publicans and harlots love one another: therefore you must know they are brethren you love, or else this is no mark at all, that you have a portion in Christ. The wickedest man in the world hath as good a mark as this: but do you know they are brethren you love? You know the brotherhood consists in being united unto Christ; this is an invisible thing, none can know it but God only. No man can say, such a one is a brother; as no man knows the things of man, save the spirit of man that is in him; so no man knows the things of another, especially the spiritual condition of another, but God.

But, you will say, though I am not certain that he is a brother, yet I love him under the notion of a brother.

Well, beloved, suppose this then: if this be a sign a man is a child of God, because he knoweth he loveth such an one, he apprehends to be a brother; then many may have signs and marks they have received Christ, when the truth is, it is no such matter.

Look upon the Papists, do they not love the brethren? You will say, no, they are not brethren they love, and therefore, their love is nothing. It is true, they are mistaken, they are not brethren; but yet, I say, that is nothing to the purpose, they love them under the notion of brethren, which you conceive to be sufficient; do not they love each other under that notion, and hate us as enemies to God and the gospel? Therefore though they are mistaken, yet because they love one another as brethren, and under that notion; according to this rule, I say, this may be an argument sufficient, and a sign whereby they may know their interest in Christ.

But, let me tell you, while men love persons under the notion of brethren, commonly they love them that are not, and hate them that are. Take all the sects in the world, they will love their own sects as brethren, and hate all others as not. As for example, there are two sorts of people in the world, one that hold up their heads by the righteousness of the law, and expect salvation according to their obedience to it; with them they are brethren that so adhere to the law, and enemies to all those that stand for the free grace of God, and the true righteousness of

God, which is by faith. Suppose you love those persons as brethren, that run after Moses and the law, for their peace and satisfaction of spirit, and despise those that are in the free grace of God, and rest upon the promises of the gospel, though they see themselves full of sin : which of these are brethren ? Surely according to the meaning of the apostle, they have passed from death to life that believe ; “ He that believeth shall be saved.” These are the brethren, do you love these men ? Oh, there are many that go by signs and marks, that cannot endure them ; they go with them under the name of libertines, and not brethren *.

Well, to draw towards a conclusion, let me tell you, whoever you are, that go by signs and marks, drawn from sanctification, you will be puzzled, if you deal faithfully with your own spirits, though you attain to ever so great a height of it.

And yet all this while let me not be mistaken ; there are censorious spirits in the world ; if we do but take off the fruits of sanctification from those great businesses the Lord never ordained them unto, presently they conclude ; here is nothing but striking at sanctification, and flinging at obedience towards God ; I say, therefore, beloved, mistake not ; sanctification of men is as much the will of God, as salvation and glory hereafter ; this is the will of God, even our sanctification : I say also, the Lord never calls persons to salvation by Christ, but he also sanctifieth them in some measure, they go still together ; and I would they were cut off from the Israel of God, that take occasion to the flesh, from the liberty of the grace of God, whereto they are called ; but still, I say, though the Lord calls men, and sanctifies them, yet he gives them some better evidences whereby he will satisfy their spirits, to sit down and have more peace and comfort of heart, than all the evidences of sanctification in the world can give unto them.

* Though there are many useful observations made by the Dr. on love of the brethren, yet I cannot agree with him in his sense of 1 John iii. 14. for it does not seem to respect the knowledge saints have of other persons, but of themselves ; *we know*, not that other persons, other saints, but *we*, ourselves, *have passed from death to life, because we*, ourselves, and not others, *love the brethren* ; and which grace being a fruit of the Spirit, and so peculiar to a man that is born again, as that it cannot be in an unregenerate man ; who, though he may love saints, as men, on natural and civil accounts, can never love them as children of God, and brethren of Christ ; and, therefore, must be an evidence of passing from death to life ; at least in some degree, though it may not come up to the revealing and receiving evidences, the spirit and faith, which, it must be owned, are the principal ones. See my Exposition of 1 John iii. 14. And besides, if by it we may know that others have passed from death to life, why not know this of ourselves by it ?

Some evidences there are, that will determine the question so clearly, that there shall not remain any just scruple : and then I do not deny but that when the Spirit of the Lord, and the faith of a believer, shall speak what they can say, and have fully resolved the question, the fruits of the spirit in the believer, may come in as handmaids to bear witness to the thing ; yet so, that the other two give a sufficient resolution to the question. These are the two great witnesses from heaven, that speak home and fully to the question in hand, and give peace and satisfaction to the spirit of man ; I mean, that it is the spirit of Christ, and the faith of a believer only, that immediately call the soul, and testify to it of its interest in Christ, and so give sufficient evidence to it. The next opportunity I will speak, God willing, more fully to these two things.

SERMON XXX.

THE REVEALING EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

THE last point was this, that it is the iniquity of every one of *us*, that the Lord hath laid upon Christ ; *us*, that “ like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way.”

But because there ariseth such a great scruple out of these general expressions, namely, how I and you shall know in particular to ourselves, that we in special are included in this ; therefore we came to consider, whether a person, or rather how a person, may know certainly his, or her iniquities are in particular laid upon Christ. The reason of this great query was,

nat though the Holy Ghost speaks of such as go astray, and turn to their own ways, that their iniquities are laid upon Christ, yet say some, and that truly too, it is not every one that goeth astray, and turneth to his own way, it is but some of these that have their iniquities laid upon Christ; and, saith the poor fainting spirit, I may be one of those that go astray, and turn to their own ways, that are set aside, and not one of those that shall share in this mercy. And therefore I would know whether I am one of the number of those that shall partake of this grace, and not one of the number of those that are rejected. I know this is a great scruple among tender consciences, thirsting after nothing more in the world, than to be satisfied, and have the case cleared, that there be no place for any more objections, that they, in particular have a portion in this present grace.

For resolution of this, I told you the last day, some evidences there are to resolve this case, yet a great mistake there is in some evidences men produce to themselves for the clearing of it. This I then said, and now say again, that signs and marks, drawn from the fruits of sanctification, are at best very litigious and doubtful evidences to resolve a spirit: and let the most exactly sanctified person, but consider the manifold frailties, and wanderings, in the best work that ever he did, and he shall have occasion to suspect that very work, as not able to speak peace unto him.

Universal obedience, sincerity of heart, and love to the brethren, are three special marks I took in task the last day, and shewed how far a soul will be to seek of certain resolution from these, when they are thoroughly examined. I shall not repeat particulars again; time will not give me leave; I will add a word in general, and so close up this matter.

Beloved, whoever you are that will examine yourselves by the fruits of sanctification, that are properly the righteousness of man after or according to the law; I dare be bold to say, there is no one fruit of it, let it be sincerity, hatred of sin, love to the brethren, or what it will, if it speaks as the Lord hath given to it to speak, that can speak peace to a soul. My ground is, what is delivered by the apostle in Gal. iii. 10, "The law, (saith he,) is not of faith;" but its voice is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to them," &c. Now, I beseech you come home a little; this

being the voice of the law, and consequently of every thing that is done, or rather not done, according to it, how can any thing we do, except it be done according to this rule exactly, speak peace? Take it in what sign or mark you will; let it be in what kind of obedience you can imagine, I ask, and I pray you ask yourselves this question, whether have you continued in all things written in the law to do them, in that particular? I say, have you performed every thing in that particular you examine yourselves by? No, you will say, there have been failings in some things: now I ask, what this can say to you that shall be the rule of your trial, as it stands full of failings and imperfections, can this speak peace? then it speaks directly otherwise than the Lord hath given it to speak; thus, that whatever a person doth, if there be not a continuance in all things written in the law to do them, the voice is cursing, "Cursed is every one," &c. How then can it secure a man, and resolve him that he hath interest in Christ, is a child of God, that saith, cursed art thou till thou continue in all things requisite to such particulars that are the rule of thy examination? Now the law can deliver no other voice but this; until it meet with continuance in all things. Hence it is that, in Gal. iv. 23, 24, the apostle distinguishes between the spiritual and natural seed of Abraham: the latter sort he compares to Agar, which is mount Sinai in Arabia, and this saith he, engendereth unto bondage; the former sort, are the children of Abraham according to the promise; as much as to say, persons born to the law, that have no other rule to walk by, and to try their estates by, but that, are thereby brought into bondage. The apostle, in Heb. ii. 15, tells us, "Christ came to deliver those who through the fear of death were subject to bondage all their lives long!" his meaning is, that the Jews, by the discipline they were under, had for the usual evidence of their peace, a conformity to the law, or a righteousness according to that; this was their ordinary way: and so till Christ came to reveal himself in the grace of the gospel, they had nothing to resolve their spirits, for satisfaction concerning their condition, but the law, and so were still subject to bondage through fear of death; as much as to say, he that hath nothing else to speak peace to him but his own righteousness, that is so far from delivering him from this fear of death, that it keeps him in bondage all his life long under it, while he walks by such a rule for his

peace; I say not, while he walks by such a rule for his conversation*; mistake me not, but while he walks by such a rule for his peace: and the reason is, because the best sanctification, in regard of the imperfections of it, is not able to speak peace to the soul, because it pronounces directly a curse. And therefore, beloved, though I will not say but that there may be comfort in some sort, even from the fruits of the spirit in men; yet that which must resolve the case, the great case, and satisfy the spirit of a person, that he hath interest in Christ, and his privileges, must be something else besides his own righteousness.

It is true, there are some kinds of comfort will flow even from the fruits of the spirit in men's conversation; namely, as he seeth how God is glorified by it in the world: it must needs administer a great deal of joy to the people of God, that he will use them as instruments, to set forth the praise of the glory of his grace: as for example, thou art a minister, and in thy ministry the Lord is pleased to shew himself abundantly, in some great measure, to clear up the consciences of his people, and cheer their hearts; and thou art an instrument of his glory, in that his free grace in the gospel is embraced, and the truth and simplicity of it published; now thou rejoicest that the Lord is glorified. But if we shall proceed so far as to gather our peace from the exercise of this ministry, thereby to be resolved of our interest in Christ from our diligence and sincerity therein; then we must know, that except there be perfection in it, this very ministry itself speaks a curse.

But, beloved, to come on to the great question yet remaining: are there not any evidences by which persons may know comfortably their interest in the privileges of Christ?

I answer, yes; There are evidences to resolve men, if the Lord do but give them unto them, and power to receive them; men may thereby sit down satisfied concerning their own interest in the privileges of Christ. Which are they, will you say? They are two. The one is a revealing† evidence, and the other is a receiving evidence. The revealing evidence, is the voice of the Spirit of God to a man's own spirit: this is the great evidence indeed, and which at last determines the question, and puts an end to all objections: even the voice of the Spirit of the Lord

* Observe the Doctor owns the law is a rule for conversation, consequently no Antinomian; see Sermon LI. of "The Use of the Law."

† Matt. xi. 27.

speaking particularly in the heart of a person, “ Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” When he saith this to the soul, there shall be never an objection, while this voice is received, worth a rush, to disquiet and disturb it: and till the Spirit of the Lord come immediately himself, and speak this to a soul, all the world shall never be able to satisfy it: in brief, therefore, beloved, you shall know your sins are laid upon Christ by the Spirit of the Lord speaking this to you; and, till he do this, all the signs and marks in the world are mere darkness, mere riddles, a soul can never understand them.

It will be a needful business, I suppose, to clear up this truth to you, and herein to shew you, that the Spirit of the Lord is mainly sent into the world by Christ, for this very purpose, to speak personally and particularly to the hearts of the elect, to satisfy them of their interest in Christ; he, in the scripture, holds out nothing more than this, that we must come at last to himself, to resolve this case, and explain this riddle for us, before we can be satisfied in it. That this may be the more evident to you, beloved,

1. It may be cleared from the very attribute or title which our Saviour gives unto the Spirit; see John xiv. 26, and xvi. 7, 8, 9—14; the title or attribute given to the Spirit, in all these places, is the Comforter; “ But the Comforter whom the Father will send in my name,” &c. “ When, he the Comforter, is come:” and again, “ Except I go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but, if I go away, I will send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth.” I say, the attribute and title of being a Comforter in any eminency, imports, that satisfaction, concerning interest in Christ, is his work. Do but consider the nature of solid comfort, and it will be clear to you.

Suppose a man have a trial in law, or an action to be debated, his heart is full of fears, especially if the title be not clear to himself; when a witness comes in and speaks point-blank to his case, that the judge himself is satisfied, and, upon that, gives the sentence in behalf of the person afraid; the testimony of this witness being accepted, gives comfort to his spirit. The truth is, beloved, the Holy Ghost is the Comforter in this regard, as he clears up the case, and makes it unquestionable to thy spirit, and mine, that our sins are forgiven. What is the occasion of all the trouble of spirit in tender hearts? God hath forsaken

me, saith one ; my sins are gone over my head, saith another ; I shall one day be called to account, and answer for them, saith a third ; what will now cheer up the heart of such ? Let it be satisfied of this, that God will not lay its sins to its charge, and that God will not forsake it for them ; then it is comforted by such a resolution ; and say what you will, except you can clear up this thing, that God will never impute iniquity to him, nor bring him to an account for it, you cannot comfort him. Now the Spirit of God, being the Comforter, must needs have this property to satisfy the spirits of believers of such things wherein their comforts consist. If they consist in assurance of pardon of sin, then he cannot be the Comforter, except he satisfy herein ; and you shall see that comfort lieth mainly in this, by Christ's own testimony, Matt. ix. 2 ; " Son (saith he), be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee ;" good cheer depends upon this testimony of forgiveness of sins ; the Spirit of God cannot make a tender heart of good cheer, till he testifies thoroughly, and clears up this truth, " Thy sins are forgiven thee."

2. Besides this bare title of Comforter, the Spirit hath this particular office given him, as that for which he comes, John xiv. 26 ; " The Comforter, whom my Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." Here it is expressed how the Spirit comforts, by teaching all things, and by leading into all truth, as you have it in John xvi. 13, where our Saviour tells us what those things are the Spirit teaches, by which he comforts ; you shall see that forgiveness of sins is the comfort of the Spirit : " He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you : " mark the words well, beloved, " He shall shew it unto you : " by this you may perceive wherein the comforting faculty of the Spirit lieth, namely, in receiving Christ, and in shewing those things it receives of him to believers. Now, what is it for the Spirit to shew to believers those things he receives of Christ ? and what are those it shews ? the things of Christ, you know, are those the apostle speaks of in Acts xiii. 38, 39, where he mentions his glorious excellencies in few words : " Be it known unto you, that by this man [Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of your sins ; and, whoever believeth on him, is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." Now these being the things of Christ, that he intended to send abroad into the world among his own

people, these are the things the Spirit receives of him, and is to shew. And what is it (you will say) to shew a thing? It is no more but this, whereas a thing may be laid up, and lie hidden, it is now drawn, held forth, and made manifest; this is to shew a thing: all which intimates thus much, that the proper work of the Spirit is to make clear and manifest to the view of believers those things of Christ, especially forgiveness of sin and justification from all things, that they are theirs from whom they were hid before; therefore, in John xvi. 8, 9, you shall find how our Saviour speaks concerning himself: "It is expedient (saith he) that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but, if I go, I will send him, and he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Among other particulars, remember this, "He shall convince the world of righteousness;" the meaning is, he shall make known my things, especially this, my righteousness, so manifestly, that he shall convince those to whom he speaks of it. But what is it for persons to be convinced? A man is then convinced, when things are made so clear to him, that he has nothing to object against them: as long as he continues objecting he is not convinced; but when things are made so plain and clear, that a man objects no more, then there is conviction. All comes to this, that the Spirit of the Lord is said to convince of the righteousness of Christ, that is, to make it so clear, that any objections made shall have no place at all; that an objector shall have no more to say against it in respect of his own particular.

And whereas it may be conceived, that the Spirit of the Lord comes to comfort only in general; know, beloved, there is this difference between the ministration of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ; Christ came into the world to merit salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins, and to comfort all that mourn: he also merited comfort in particular, to be applied by the Spirit, yet still, in his ministration, he runs upon general terms for the most part; but the Spirit of the Lord is sent in his room, to come to every man's spirit particularly by himself, and speak that within a man's own self, that Christ by this ministry of the Gospel speaks but in general to men: and that is the reason that Christ saith, "It is expedient that I go away, because if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you:" as if he had said, he himself doth not come so particularly home to men's

spirits : I speak in regard of the general course of Christ, in his ordinary way of ministration ; not but that in extraordinary cases he did come home in particular to men's spirits ; but the ministration Christ was to exercise was general, and spake more in general than the Spirit did, and therefore he appropriates comfort to the Spirit rather than to himself, " If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ;" that is, while I am here, the Comforter is not with you, and therefore I go that he may come. This clears up the truth, that the Spirit of the Lord is sent of purpose for this very business, to resolve the spirits of men, whether they have interest in Christ or not.

But now lest these should seem to be too general, let us descend to particulars : and therein you shall see, that the evidencing particularly to a man's spirit, his interest in Christ, is the proper work of the Spirit of God ; for this purpose look into Rom. viii. 14, 15, " Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father : for the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ." Give me leave, I pray you, to open some things out of this text ; here you have two spirits set in opposition ; the *spirit of fear and bondage*, and the *spirit of adoption*. The spirit of bondage is nothing else but a spirit that speaks from such principles as always lead unto it ; the true meaning is, so long as men have no other spirit speaking in them, but from the principle of their own righteousness, they have none but such as lead to bondage ; " But we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father : " as if he had said, the Spirit of God speaking to us, is such a spirit that speaks, in such as have him, this gracious language, " Abba Father ; " that is, that by which we are able to say of ourselves that God is our Father, is the spirit of adoption ; nothing but that is able to make us cry " Abba Father." What is that ? you will say. The true meaning is, when a person is so resolved, as that he sits down satisfied, God is now become his Father, then is he able to cry, " Abba Father." It is not saying *Father* in a general notion, that is meant, but *Father* in respect of a personal appropriation, *my Father*. Now, when any comes to this, to be able to call God his own Father, then is the case resolved, he is

a child of God; and he cannot say, God is his Father, till he can say, he is his child. This is by the apostle again expressly appropriated to the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of adoption.

And that this may be more clear, the next words are more full; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God:" now if the question be asked, How shall I know whether I be the child of God, or no? The answer is, "The Spirit testifies with our spirits, that we are the children of God;" and that testimony resolves the case: and whereas the apostle saith, "The Spirit itself beareth witness;" his meaning is, that it is the immediate voice of the spirit without any instrument; as when we say of a man, he did a thing himself, it implies, he did not do it by another, or by deputies, but in his own person, and by himself immediately; so the Spirit himself, in his own person, comes and gives this testimony to a man, that he is the child of God.

Look also into 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and the case will be yet more clear, that there is no satisfaction concerning things freely given of God, but only by the voice of his Spirit; in the beginning of the chapter the apostle clears himself, that he meant not to deal with them "in the enticing words of men's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power;" *demonstration*, the word hath a great deal of force among logicians; it is the strongest proof to evince any thing that is in question, that can be; it is that kind of proof which carrieth such light with it, that it cannot be gainsayed: it is as much as to say, I came not in my own strength; but I came with the Spirit of God, that brings demonstration with him, and that so clear, that there is no gainsaying it; and that this is the meaning here, observe but the words in verse 9, and so on, and you shall see it clearly; there the apostle saith, "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him; but (saith he) God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit;" as if he should say, there are things prepared by the Lord for his own people, that are so deep and hidden, that eye can never see, ear can never hear, the heart of man can never understand; that is, there is no way in the world to find them out, but only that he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; so that it is plain and clear, that nothing besides can make known those things which

the Spirit himself makes known; and he gives the reason: "For (saith he) the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God:" though there be no diving into the secrets of God, yet the Spirit of God searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; and he proves this by an argument thus; "No man (saith he) knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man; so no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God:" observe the comparison well; when a man hath some secret thought within himself, and only within his own breast, (it may be) of good to such and such a man; while these thoughts are within his breast, who can dive into them, while he yet conceals them within himself? no man but he that thus conceals them; this is that which the apostle drives at mainly: even so is it with the secrets of God; the Lord in his own counsels hath set down particularly by name*, this, and that man, and woman in special; these are my elect vessels; they shall be saved by Christ, and partake of privileges here and hereafter; this, I say, the Lord hath not himself communicated in one word from the scripture, **I** mean, expressed such a man in particular; as, he hath not said, thou Thomas, art the man **I** mean, these things concern thee; things concerning particular persons, are concealed and hid in the breast of the Lord: but although it be hid there, in respect of any particular vessel that shall be made partaker thereof; though it be concealed in respect of any visible demonstration; though neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor heart hath understood this peculiar dignity; yet the Lord reveals this by his Spirit. Now that the Spirit is able to do it, is clear; for as the spirit of a man knows the things of a man, so the Spirit of God knows the things of God; and as he **only** knows them himself, so he knows those that are freely given us of him; so that if ever you be satisfied in your own spirits, concerning that which is not personally and particularly mentioned in the word of God, as thy name, and my name, which are not recorded there; then we must have it done by the Spirit of God, that only knows the mind of God; for none knows the secret of God, but he that is in God's breast: none can reveal these, but he alone that lieth in his bosom, the Spirit of God; therefore, in 2 Cor. i. 22, the apostle tells us, that God hath *sealed us*, and given the earnest of the Spirit.

* Phil. iv. 3.

YOU may find the like expression in Ephes. i. 13, 14, where the apostle saith, "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, that is the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession:" the spirit is said to be a seal and an earnest given before-hand: but what is it for a person to be sealed, or to receive an earnest? To be sealed is no more but this, namely, that whereas the Lord in his own secret council from eternity, singled out in his own thoughts such a particular person, and said, he shall be saved; afterwards he comes and sets a mark as it were upon him, that so he may be known: as when a man goeth to buy sheep, (bear with the comparison) he looks upon twenty in a flock, it may be, and he thinks with himself they shall be his; after he hath thus chosen them, by and by he comes and sets his special mark upon every one of them, that they may be known to be his own. So the Lord deals with his people; first, in his thoughts he culls out such a number, and afterwards he comes and sets an evident mark upon them, and seals them: and this sealing is every where appropriated to the Spirit of God.

By all these testimonies, I hope, you may be abundantly satisfied, that the resolution of this great case, whether or no I have interest in Christ, must be the particular voice of the Spirit of the Lord to the hearts of those, to whom the privileges of Christ do indeed belong; and till there be such a voice, there cannot possibly be a full resolution of the case.

And yet, for all this universal testimony of Christ and his apostles, how lamentable is it to hear the scorns, out-cries, and reproaches of men, against those that dare but say, they know their condition by the Spirit of the Lord: do but tell them, that he informs them of their condition, and speak of his revelation for satisfaction, presently they cry out, these are enthusiasts, have revelations, must be satisfied by the Spirit, before they have satisfaction. I beseech you take notice, how you blaspheme the Spirit of God; how dare you cast such reproachful terms upon him? Dare you say, he is not given to reveal these things, and for this very purpose? Dare you say, he is not a Spirit of revelation? Is the Spirit of the Lord upon persons out of date now with you? I say, beloved, let men say what they can, till he comes and puts an end to the controversy in the spirit of a man, he shall never be satisfied and resolved.

But some will be ready to object, We will not deny but it is

the voice of the Spirit that will satisfy the case, but here remains the case yet in question unanswered: suppose I hear such a voice in me, saying, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" here is the doubt: this is a mystery, oh that the Lord would enable you to fathom it! This is the usual way of men, if the word itself did bear witness to this particular voice of the Spirit in me, then could I be satisfied that this were his voice; but if the word do not bear witness to it, speaking in me, I dare not trust it.

Beloved, let me not be mistaken, I answer, concerning this having recourse to the word, to give testimony to this particular applying voice of the Spirit in a man, that he may be resolved it is his: I say, that it is true, the Spirit of the Lord never speaks to any believer, but he always speaks according to the word of grace revealed; and if his voice, and the word, be in the soul, (as they go always together in the faithful) they will agree, as face answers face in a glass; but yet beware, that you make not the credit of the voice of the Spirit, to depend upon the word; as now I ask of any man, which is of the greatest credit, the testimony of the Spirit, or the word barely considered; if you say, the word written is of greater credit than the testimony of the Spirit, then the Spirit wants something in itself of credit; for this is a certain rule, he that is trusted for a surety's sake, he, for whose sake he is trusted, is of greater credit than the other trusted for his sake; so if the word be the surety for which we will credit the testimony of the Spirit, then it is of greater credit than the Spirit itself: but now let me tell you, it is not the word that makes us believe the Spirit, but it is he that makes us give credit to the word: we do not receive the Spirit because the word testifies of him, but we receive that, because by the Spirit we are enabled thereto. What our Saviour saith of himself, is as true of the Spirit of the Lord, resolving the question of a man's interest in Christ; "If I bear witness of myself, my testimony is true;" so I say, if the Spirit of the Lord testify of himself, that it is he indeed, and no delusion, it is true; for the Spirit himself bears true witness of himself, that he is the Spirit of the Lord, and not the spirit of delusion.

Suppose a father meets his child in the dark, the child is afraid, and fears it is not his father; now, is not the father able to satisfy the child of himself that he is indeed the father, except he bring

some other man to resolve it that he is? Is a man able to bear witness of himself to resolve a particular question, and will you take away this privilege from the Spirit of the Lord, to satisfy of himself that he is the Spirit of truth, and not the spirit of delusion?

In brief therefore, as it is the testimony of the Spirit, speaking indeed according to the word, that must satisfy us, that we are the children of God; so, the same must assure us that he is the true Spirit of God; and not the spirit of delusion; but still, I say, he speaking to believers concerning their interest in Christ, always speaks according to the word of grace; and it is most certainly true, that every voice in them speaking peace, contrary to that, is not the voice of the Spirit of the Lord; yet it is only the Spirit of God, that can truly satisfy their spirit, that it is his own testimony, and not the spirit of delusion.

You may understand the word in a double sense, either for the word of the law, or of grace in the gospel. Now mark, when we say, it is the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits, according to the word, that we are the sons of God; it is not the word of the law that agrees in this with the voice of the Spirit; that speaks nothing but curses; therefore, if you will regard what that saith, and compare the voice of the Spirit speaking with it, there will be no agreement: the word, according to which the Spirit of the Lord speaks, when he speaks to his people, is the word of grace, and that is no more but this, (2 Cor. v. 19), "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" this is the word of grace according to which it speaks, reconciling the world to himself; even the world, when men are no otherwise but merely men of the world.

Now if any thing suggest, contrary to this word of grace, it is the voice of the spirit of delusion, and not the Spirit of God.

But how shall I know that this voice, though it be according to the word of grace, is indeed the voice of the Spirit of the Lord, and be satisfied that it is so?

For answer to this, in general, I must tell you, that as in all arts and sciences, there are some principles that are as ground works therein, beyond which there must be no enquiry, so also in divine things, in answering cases of conscience, there must be some principle that must be as the last determining principle,

beyond which there must be no further enquiry, nor questioning: as, when a man heareth of something that is to him probable, to clear it up, he would have something to come in that should make that certain, and so satisfy him concerning it. Now that which is the last principle and ground of things, as something there must be, when that comes, a man must be satisfied with that, and question no further concerning the thing, or else he shall never be resolved: so I say to the case in hand, if I would be resolved concerning my interest in Christ, I must take for granted some principle or other, beyond which I must not question, or else there will be question upon question; and so a running *in infinitum*, and never a conclusion of the case in question. As for example, there is the voice of the word of grace, we are justified freely by his grace; and this in the spirit of a man, telling him, according to the word, that his sins are forgiven him: how shall I know, saith he, that this is the voice of the Spirit of God? For answer, let me ask but this question; is there any thing in the world of better credit, or rather to be believed, than the Spirit himself? Nay, can any believe but by him? if not, then nothing else is able satisfyingly to bear witness to the soul but itself; this is as if we should receive the testimony of the Spirit upon the credit of some other thing.

I beseech you, beloved, understand me aright; for here is the voice of the Spirit, speaking in the believer, according to the revelation of grace in the word, saying, thou art the person that dost partake of this grace; this, I say, is the voice of the Spirit of the Lord, establishing a soul, and it may be satisfied in it; especially when the Spirit of the Lord gives power to it to receive it, speaking in it.

It is true indeed, John saith in 1 John iv. 1, there must be "a trying of spirits, because all are not of God:" but, if you mark it well, he speaks of the trial of ministers, whether they preach true doctrine or not, and refers not to the trial of the Spirit, testifying according to the word, particularly to a man's self; and for any thing in the world to give credit unto, or to be a rule of trial to the Spirit of the Lord, and the voice of it being, as I said, always according to the word, the Lord never appointed any thing for that end: for he never intended that any thing in the world should be of such credit, as to give credit to his spirit; but the Spirit himself hath sufficient power of himself, by his

own efficacy to clear his own testimony to the heart of the believer.

Thus I have endeavoured both to show that the Spirit of the Lord is he that must satisfy a believer ; and also how he alone is able to do it, that nothing else can ; that this testimony and voice, being according to the word, is his own, and not a false spirit's.

But there is one thing more, very considerable, for the further resolution of the case in hand, that the Spirit of the Lord both speaks, and likewise gives to believers, to credit and receive what he speaks.

As for instance, suppose the honourablest man in the world should come and tell a person, such a friend of yours is dead, and hath left all his estate to you, you are the heir ; this man may speak the truth, and nothing but that, and yet the person may not be satisfied of the truth of it, except he be of such credit with him that he takes it for truth which he speaks. From hence it comes to pass, that, besides the voice of the spirit of the Lord, there must be a voice in the spirit of a man to be as an echo, and that is faith ; and, therefore, at first, I told you, there were two main evidences ; now, when these concur, then is a man resolved.

Were the Lord hath spoken to the heart of a man, by his Spirit, according to the word, and his faith receives this testimony, then he sits down by it, and seeks no other satisfaction.

But, for this assurance of faith, (seeing there are many things to be spoken of it) I shall take another opportunity hereafter to handle it.

SERMON XXXI.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.

Two things I have proposed to be considered in this passage. 1. Whose iniquities they are that the Lord hath laid upon Christ, which, after we had handled, we came to the 2d. How persons may know that their iniquities in particular are laid upon him. Here I must crave your patience a little, being desired, by some, to clear up some particulars formerly delivered, being stumbled at by some, to whom they seem not to be evident enough.

There were two things proposed for the resolving of this question, How a person may know in particular his own interest in Christ?

1. I discovered the dubiousness of the way that many persons go for the resolving of this case, laying down such arguments, and proposing them in such a way as can never give them satisfaction; that is, a proposing to themselves signs and marks from their sanctification; to be resolved of their interest in Christ: I instanced in three particular marks; Universal obedience; Sincerity of heart; and, Love of the brethren. Now some have conceived, that herein I have directly struck at the heart of these particulars, as if I attempted the overthrow of them: but mistake not, beloved, I spake only of their insufficiency, to give a satisfactory resolution of the great case depending; they are of excellent use in their own kind, sphere, and orb; but, when they are set on work to do those things that are beyond their power, men do but entangle themselves, instead of getting themselves loose. Universal obedience, as it is practised, leaves the case very doubtful, in respect of its many imperfections; and, in that regard, cannot of itself determine the case, but there will be scruples arising from it.

I said, there is no such thing in the world as universal obedience, if you take it according to the property of speech; for that is obedience to all things; that is the true meaning of the phrase: now, there is no man under heaven is obedient to all things; "In many things we sin all," saith James: it cannot then be universal, so long as there be so many particular failings in the hearts and ways of men. Universal (some say) in the purpose of the heart, though not in practice: I answered, the purposes of the heart are many times extremely corrupt; there is not a constancy of actual purpose of heart toward the will of God; many times there is an indisposition of heart, and averseness of spirit to many things God requires; witness the case of affliction, what contesting is there with the will of God in bearing it! What groaning under it with a kind of impatience at least! Not that pleasure taken in it as God intends, and as the thing itself deserves. Afflictions are for the good of God's people; "They shall bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised therein:" and, as they are good, they must not be distasteful, but rather affected; as a man prizeth such a physician that can bring a medicine to cure his disease; yea, the very medicine itself, though bitter for the present. But how far the hearts of men are from being thus disposed, even believers themselves (for they too have many such frailties) appears by their own experience. Where is that constant disposition, and propensity of their spirits, to the whole will of God?

And yet, I say, if there were a kind of obedience in men, yet that cannot be an evidence to determine the case of itself: that that must be an evidence must be proper and peculiar; if it be common to unbelievers and enemies of God with believers, it is no distinguishing mark; but, in Philip. iii. 6, the apostle saith of himself, that while he was a persecutor, even at that time, "according to the righteousness of the law he was blameless." He walked strictly and exactly, without blame, and yet was a persecutor. Now, I ask this question, Suppose a man's heart tell him he walks blameless according to the righteousness of the law, as the heart of Paul said; this will not prove him to be in a better estate than he was, who was even then a persecutor, not converted to the faith; therefore, there may be a walking blamelessly in the righteousness of the law before conversion. For

my part, I desire to see further light in this truth ; but, to me, it seems as plain and clear as the day, that from the express words of the apostle himself, a blameless heart there may be, and certainly strict to all the will of God, and yet a man be in the state of nature.

For sincerity of heart, in doing things to the Lord, with respect to him, what that is the apostle expresseth in the true nature of it, saying, "Servants, obey your masters in all things, in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord." There is a singleness of heart to the Lord, when the heart hath an eye to him in that it doth. If it hath any wrong ends, it is not sincerity, because that is sincerity that is done for the Lord. Now, where shall a man find rest in the examination of his own sincerity, that he may have peace by it, so long as men find upon examination, so much self? I dare be bold to say, that believers themselves have actually, in their thoughts, themselves in their performances, more than they have God in them ; and they find stronger impressions in their spirits to do, with regard to themselves, than to the Lord : it is an infirmity in them, and, I grant, they may not allow of it ; but the thing is true, there is a constant selfishness in that which men do : if, therefore, upon examination, the heart must of necessity accuse itself, as being extremely selfish, how can a man conclude certainly, a sincerity, where there is so much opposition and contrariety to it.

But suppose there may be sincerity ; let it be granted, people may be sincere in their own hearts. The Jews, that were enemies to Christ, had sincerity according to God, that is the true property of sincerity ; in Rom. x. 2, 3, "I bear them record they have a zeal:" here is the fervency of sincerity, a *zeal for God*. If their zeal had been never so hot, had it been for themselves, though it seemed for God, yet it had not been sincerity ; but if there be zeal, and that for God, this is sincerity, take it in the proper nature of it ; and if they had taken a wrong course, and gone a wrong way in their zeal for God, it might not be true sincerity ; but they had a zeal for God, and this was exercised in the will of God himself ; for they went to establish their own righteousness, and that "was according to the law of Moses ;" as you see in ver. 3, 4, 5. Here is that we describe to be sincerity, namely, earnestness of heart, in the doing of that which the law of God requires, and that for God himself ; and yet, "They did not

submit themselves to the righteousness of God:" where it is plain, they were enemies to the Lord, and Christ himself, while they had such zeal to God.

As for the point of love to the brethren, there is much stumbling, as I conceive, at that raised from the text, 1 John. iii. 1—4. Hence men conclude, that the love of the brethren is an infallible mark of itself, they are the children of God in Christ: for answer to it, I think the apostle may be understood in this passage of one christian's knowing another, by the love expressed one to another. But you will say, "Why may he not mean as well, we may know ourselves by it?" I answer this, and profess, let us love never so well, there will be cause of suspicion, or occasion at the least, that our love is not found, such as it should be; for if we understand how the apostle describes the love of the brethren, in 1 Cor. xiii. where he recites many circumstances, qualities, or properties essential unto it; as that "love seeketh not her own, love is not puffed up, it envieth not;" with many others; I say, if a person will but examine his love to the brethren, by those many particulars in that place, I know his heart cannot but tell him, he is exceeding faulty in all these; it will tell him, I am quite contrary to this rule in my heart; I have and do much seek myself in the love of my brethren; I am much puffed up over them; I have been too much a censurer of their ways; I have exalted myself too high: I say, a true enlightened tender-hearted man, that can but look back and search into the several turnings and windings of his own heart, concerning the love that he hath to the brethren, will find his heart will be still accusing him, and as long as it is, surely it is not speaking peace; where there is an accusation brought against a man, there is not an absolving, or discharging him by the same voice: but the love that we have to the brethren, is exceeding blame-worthy in regard of the imperfection of it; and all that blame-worthiness will stare in a man's face, and accuse him as defective in it. Now if there be suspicion in the heart, there cannot be quietness in the mind.

But to go on; I do not determine peremptorily, that a man cannot by way of evidence receive any comfort from his* sancti-

* So that the Doctor does not deny sanctification to be an evidence of a man's state, and of his interest in Christ, and title to heaven, only of a lesser kind, and an after evidence; and, indeed, faith, which he makes to be the receiving evidence, is a branch and a principal branch, of sanctification.

fication ; I will give you somewhat for the clearing of my judgment, which I know is according to truth ; namely, that the Spirit must first reveal the gracious mind of the Lord to our spirits, and give us faith to receive that testimony, and to sit down as satisfied with it, before ever any work of sanctification can possibly give any evidence ; but when the testimony of the Spirit is received by faith, and the soul sits down satisfied with it, then all the gifts of the Spirit bear witness together with it, and with faith.

In brief, beloved, all the righteousness that ever mere man reached unto, since the fall, of itself, was never able to say, upon good grounds, such a person is a child of God ; nay, I will go higher, the very word of grace is not able to speak to a soul, till the Spirit of the Lord speaks : this seems strange, but, beloved, give me leave to appeal a little to your own experience : how many times have some of you heard such words of grace, as are revealed in the gospel published unto you, as may revive the hearts of men ! It may be, you have read them over, meditated on them, and endeavoured to reason out your comfort from them ; and yet all this while they have been dumb to your spirits ; they have been like a dry tree, or rather a tree in winter, without the appearance of sweetness from them, or in them ; at another time the same word of grace is marrow and fatness to your spirits : what should make such difference, that a man should find fatness in it at one time, and yet should be so dry to him at another ? All the difference lieth in this ; when the Spirit of the Lord will speak himself with the word of grace, it shall be sweet and satisfactory ; when he will be silent, the word shall not speak any thing ; for, indeed, that is but the trumpet of the Spirit ; if the Spirit blow, the trumpet makes a sound ; if it blow not, it makes none at all ; as he speaks in the word of grace, so the melody of it ravishes the ears and hearts of believers ; but if he himself will be silent, there is no music in the word.

I came further to consider, how a man may then come to know his portion, or interest in Christ.

First, As I said, the Spirit of grace, speaking to the hearts of God's people, according to the word of grace, is the *revealing evidence* : I cleared this out of such testimonies of scripture, as I thought none could have contradicted ; he is therefore called the Comforter, because he speaks peace to the people of God ; he is therefore said to take of Christ's, and shew them to them

he is therefore called the " Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." No man under heaven can say, God is my Father, with propriety, but by the Spirit of adoption ; men may with lip-service say, *our Father*, but in spirit, comfort, confidence, and knowledge, that the Lord is their Father in particular, it is impossible any should say it, but by the Spirit of Adoption ; " The Spirit itself bearing witness with our Spirits, that we are the children of God ;" of which we shall speak more by and by.

To draw towards a conclusion of this subject. This Spirit of the Lord always speaks according to the word of grace ; but doth not receive its credit from it. The word of grace is the visible voice of the Spirit ; his testimony to the hearts of believers, is the hidden voice ; and it is impossible they should jar, because both of them proceed from one and the self same spirit of truth : therefore, I say, there is always a necessary argument between the word of grace, and the voice of the Spirit ; so that you may safely conclude, if there be a voice speaking in the heart of man, contrary to the word, it is not the voice of the Spirit : yet, nevertheless, nothing in the world is able to satisfy a person, that such a voice is the voice of the Spirit indeed, but he himself that speaks it. I will go higher, and say again, that which I said before, that no person under heaven is able, upon satisfied grounds, to say, the word of grace is the word of God, but by the Spirit's testimony. All the arguments in the world can never satisfy men with conviction, that this book is the word of God, but the Spirit of the Lord bearing witness, concerning the truth of it. I know this is taken to be a strong argument, and though to be convincing in the judgment of most men, to prove that the word of grace is the word of God, namely, the exceeding power and force it hath upon the spirits of men ; for, say they, nothing but the word of God could have such predominancy over them : beloved, I beseech you, be not mistaken, as if I spake against the word of grace, or the truth or authority of it, only let me shew you the true foundation whereby you may be enabled to rely upon it, and be convinced of the truth and infallibility of it ; I dare be bold to say, human words work sensibly as strong impressions upon the spirits of wicked men, as ordinarily the word of grace works upon the spirits of believers. For example, to a person condemned to die, looking for his execution, there comes a word of grace from the king, his life shall be spared, he sending him his

pardon; what impressions do these words work upon that condemned wretch! What a print hath it upon his spirit! What raptures of joy doth it produce! I think there are few believers that will say, they are ordinarily sensible of stronger impressions upon their own spirits by the word of God, than such malefactors have by the words of a prince: again, a fierce and tyrannical master comes to his servant, or scholar, speaking big and terribly to them, sometimes strikes them with terror and amazement: sometimes also the terror of a king's voice hath struck dead a person against whom he was incensed; another hath gone home, and never enjoyed himself again out of the extremity of the grief, and deepness of impression, such words have had upon his spirit; such dread, the words of a king works upon the spirits of men, especially if there be dependency upon him: oh, then, thinks he, all is lost and gone, he is undone for ever, if the king do but frown upon him. The thunderings of the law work terrors upon the spirits of men, it is true; but certainly, beloved, there hath been well-nigh as deep and strong impressions made in the natural hearts of men, from the terrible words of a king, as from the terror of the law; at least so strong, that many times you are not able to find such from any divine words, as from such human words: and therefore such an argument as this, though it be probable and useful; yet it is not infallible to prove the truth of the word of God, and so give satisfaction to the spirits of men, of the truth of it: the proof indeed, that must be satisfying in conclusion, is this, the Spirit of the Lord satisfies the spirits of believers, that it is his word; and so, after much dispute, the most solid divines resolve the case, that he must determine the point, and resolve it; not but that there is an unchangeable stability in the word, and a man may be satisfied of it: all that I aim at, is this, to reduce you to that principle that indeed gives true satisfaction, and not dwell only in such that will admit of some dispute.

Now I will go on, to that which remains behind, and that is the second evidence, whereby persons may come to know their interest in Christ: the former was a revealing and working evidence; this we shall now speak of, is a receiving evidence, and this is the faith of a believer: though the Spirit of the Lord reveals his mind to men, yet they are not fully resolved concerning it, till by faith they receive it.

An honest man may come and tell a friend, there are such and such lands settled upon thee, but he is not resolved of it, though the man speak never so true, except he give credit unto him, and so receives his testimony; but when a man first speaks the truth, and his credit is such, that he to whom he speaks receives it, then he is satisfied, but not till then.

The Spirit of the Lord brings the thoughts of God to the elect, telling them, that he is their salvation; now, till they receive this testimony, and believe it, they are never resolved; but when they receive, and believe it, that it is a true testimony, then they sit down satisfied.

When a man brings word such legacies are given you, and you credit him, then you are satisfied; but not before.

Concerning this evidence of faith, I shall propose two things to your consideration.

1. How the scriptures plentifully authorize faith, to this business of evidencing our interests in Christ.

2. What kind of evidence this believing holds out in scripture; and of these as briefly as possible.

1. If you will mark the scripture well, you shall find that it authorizes faith in a believer, to give full evidence concerning interest in Christ; for the clearing of this, take notice, that a solid argument that necessarily infers a conclusion, is a full proof of it; look into Acts xiii. 38, 39, you shall see, how necessarily it must be received, that faith gives interest in the privileges of Christ: "Be it known to you, brethren (saith the apostle), that by this man, (namely, Christ), is preached unto you, forgiveness of sin; and whosoever believeth on him, is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses:" out of this text I argue thus, if there be justification from all things where there is believing, this believing is a proof of it; the conclusion that necessarily follows from the argument, also infers the proof of it, and its validity; the apostle here endeavours to prove that every person that believes is justified from all things: if therefore thou dost believe, this is a certain truth, thou art justified from all things from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses. It is an undeniable argument, because the apostle affixes justification to believing; he doth not give the effecting of justification to it; but annexeth it to believing as the evidence: every one that believes is justified,

though it is not believing, by the worthiness of its own act, that justifies the person.

But I will clear it further; or some will be moving objections against the effectualness of faith, as the spirit of the Lord is in it to satisfy the spirits of christians concerning their interest in Christ: therefore look into Rom. xv. 13, where the apostle proves a fulness of evidence in faith, concerning all things that may fill up joy: "Now the God of peace, fill you with all joy and peace in believing:?" do but observe the phrase well: all joy and peace in the fulness thereof, come to persons in believing. What is it for a man to have fulness of joy? this consists not only in the apprehension of goodness in a thing, but in the propriety of it, and the security that it shall not miscarry. A man may know there is great treasure in such a place, and not joy in it, if it be not his; and if it be his, and in danger to miscarry, and be taken from him, it doth not fill him with joy; there is not this joy, except there be assuredness that it is not in danger, then is there joy indeed; for even all the fulness of Christ which believers receive, though apprehended for the extent of it in general, hath not power to work joy in their spirits, if they cannot apprehend this fulness to themselves in particular: men may come to have some glimpse of it, but they only joy in it that find their names written, and have propriety in it.

Again, Though there be propriety, yet except the person be secure from miscarriage in it, he will be in fear and sadness; so that there cannot be fulness of joy; therefore it must follow, that where there is that, there is not only propriety, but also security, in respect of the safety of it: now saith the apostle, "God fills you with all joy in believing:?" but except believing could appropriate the excellencies of Christ to particular persons, and secure them concerning the safety of these, that they shall not miscarry, this believing could not be the instrument of all joy. therefore it must needs follow, there is a satisfyingness in believing, in that there is all joy in it and by it: a man that is at law is never quiet, till his case be determined; as long as there is fear that the sentence of the court, or suspicion, the cause will go against him, so long he is unquiet: but when the sentence is given, and given for him, then he is at rest: even so, you can never be at quiet if your hearts be enlightened and convinced of

your natural estate, but you must be full of fear till you know the sentence of the Lord concerning you; it must therefore follow, that that which brings peace to men must clear to them what that sentence is: "For, (saith the apostle), the God of hope doth fill you with all joy and peace in believing:" in believing, then, the soul receives peace; that is, it receives the answer and sentence of the Lord concerning itself, even the sentence of peace; for there cannot be peace till it be satisfied of this.

If this testimony will not serve, you shall find how the Holy Ghost appropriates full assurance to faith; and, therefore, faith must needs be a very excellent and satisfying evidence. Look into Col. ii. 2, there you shall see how clear the apostle is in this: in verse 1, he tells the Colossians, what conflicts he had with his spirit in their behalf, to this end, that they "might be comforted to all riches of full assurance of understanding, and acknowledging of God the Father, and of Christ." Observe, he speaks here of the riches of full assurance, of understanding, and acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus, with God and the Father: what is it for a man to understand and acknowledge the Lord Jesus, but believing? To acknowledge him, is to believe in him. Now, saith the apostle, there is riches of full assurance in this understanding and acknowledgment: and in verse 5, he tells us expressly, wherein this full assurance of understanding and acknowledgment stands; "Joying (saith he) and rejoicing in the steadfastness of your faith." So then, that steadfastness of faith is the full assurance of understanding, and acknowledging the Lord Jesus. Some will grant that faith hath an evidencing power in it, but only as it concurs with other evidences, and so gives full assurance; but the apostle doth not only appropriate assurance, but even fulness of assurance, to faith alone.

But, you will say, perhaps, the text is somewhat dark, and may be otherwise understood: that I may, therefore, clear the matter more fully, and stop the mouths of all gainsayers, I will allege the words of the apostle, that assurance is of faith, and even full assurance; in Heb. x. 22, "Let us draw near, (saith he) with a true heart, with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience:" here you see, expressly, that full assurance is applied to faith, and he layeth down the ground of it in the next words, "having our hearts

sprinkled from an evil conscience." Now, what is it can sprinkle and purge the accusing and corrupt conscience, but the blood of Christ? If there be any sin upon it, whereby it becomes an accusing and an evil one, that cannot be pacified and quieted, till the blood of Christ comes "that takes away the sin of the world;" this is that which sprinkleth the conscience, from whence there is full assurance of faith; so that faith fetches full assurance to the spirits of believers, not from within themselves, but from without, even from that which sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience.

Now, then, if faith receives a full assurance, certainly it must needs be an unquestionable evidence with which a man may be satisfied in all enquiries. What is the end of enquiries, but the assurance of a thing? When a man is already assured, especially fully assured of a thing, he never enquires any further, or calls for more witness. Look but upon your trials at law; there comes in one witness, and he speaks point-blank (as they say) to the case, and makes it as clear as the day; by him the judge is fully satisfied of the case; he will bid all other witnesses stand by, he hath heard enough. So the apostle tells us, there is a "full assurance of faith:" doth faith assure a man, wherefore doth he then enquire further? When he hath enquired his heart out, he can attain but to assurance; he can but be satisfied: if he have this by believing, what need he look further? If witness comes in, after a full testimony is given, it doth but spend time, for the first witness hath given sufficient satisfaction: so, if the Spirit of the Lord come in, and bear witness, that such a soul is interested in Christ; when he, and the faith of a believer, give their evidence, and raise full assurance from that evidence given, for what purposes serve all other evidences?

Consider one place more, and it is of great moment, in 1 John, v. 7, 8, 9, 10, where the apostle speaks as much of witnessing, as is spoken again in all scripture; "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one: and there are three that bear record on earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one:" mark that expression well, *These three agree in one*. What are these will you say? There is a great deal of dispute about the meaning of Spirit, Water, and Blood. Beloved, the dispute will end, if you observe the next words, "He

that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself:" they agree in one; in what? in believing; as much as to say, a man hath as much witness and evidence as can possibly be desired, when he hath believing within himself; for in that agree these three witnesses, the Spirit, the Water, and Blood. The apostle clears the matter further, how there is sufficient evidence in believing alone, in the next words; "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar:" he being willing to clear this, that faith is sufficient to resolve a soul of its interest in Christ, doth it thus; when it is given a person to believe, he takes God's bare word, without any other testimony, and sits down and subscribes to it; but, when he dares not believe that word, but requires more evidence to satisfy him, than God hath appointed, but will have signs and marks drawn from his own works, as well as the word of grace, to give him assurance, he makes God a liar. How so? Because he doth not take God for a God of truth, who, when he hath spoken, will not sit down with it, but will call for further evidence. But, when men seek after signs and marks to testify to God's word of grace, that he hath spoken, or God shall not be believed, what is this but to make him a liar? Suppose a man brings tidings of such large deeds of gift; but, except another come and testify with him, he shall not be believed; what do we esteem him better than a liar?

I am sure he doth not take him for a true man, if he did, he would be satisfied with his testimony; this is the sense of the apostle in that place, as I take it, *That he that believes not makes God a liar* in his word; this makes it clear that there is a large evidencing faculty in believing.

Let us now see what kind of evidence believing gives: as I said before, it is not a revealing, nor an effecting, but it is a receiving evidence; or it is an evidence as it receives that testimony which the Spirit holds out, applying it unto the heart; it is an evidence, as an officer in court is one upon trial of a case, that speaks nothing of his own knowledge, but produceth records, and testifieth the authenticity of them: the life of evidence is materially in the records themselves, but the officer is an evidence, as he asserts the truth of them.

It is even so with faith: the Spirit of the Lord makes the records, and speaks them to the heart; faith comes in, and receives the truth of them. In brief, faith is an evidence that

takes possession of that which the Spirit of the Lord reveals and manifests to a person; I say, as it takes possession, or as it enters upon the deed of gift, the spirit of the Lord brings to the heart Possession is a good evidence in land; let a man prove he had lawful possession given him, and that proves his title to be good. The Spirit, indeed, makes the title good, but faith makes good the entry and possession, and so clears the title to us, though good in itself before; faith is nothing else but the receiving of Christ, that enters upon the possession of him.

To apply it to our purpose in hand: would you know that the Lord hath laid your iniquities upon Christ, you must know it thus; is there a voice behind thee, or within thee, saying particularly to thee in thyself, "Thy sins are forgiven thee?" Dost thou see this voice agree with the word of grace, that is, dost thou see it is held out to most vile and wretched creatures, as thou canst be? And, upon this revelation of the mind of the Lord by his Spirit, according to that word, doth he give to thee to receive that testimony of the spirit, to sit down with it as satisfied, that, upon that agreeing with the word of grace, thou makest full reckoning thou hast propriety in this particularly to thyself? If thou dost receive the testimony of the Spirit, according to that word, here is thy evidence; thou hast thy propriety and portion in this. How will this be made good? you will say. Consider that in John i. 12, 13; "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but, to as many as received him, to them he gave power to be the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Mark one thing first, that receiving him, is called believing on him, or on his name; and, observe what follows, "As many as did receive him, to them he gave power;" so it is in our translation; but, in the original, the word may be rendered, he gave them right or privilege, or he gave a warrant, as I may so say. As when kings gave out their warrants, thy hereby authorize persons to such and such offices; so the receiving of Christ hath this consequence, namely, Christ's authorizing or warranting a person to be an adopted son; from whence it follows most clearly, that when persons believe, there needs no more but that, to give them propriety, to authorize and warrant them to claim the adoption of sons.

But you will say, There is a dead faith in the world, and a man may presume of receiving Christ; and therefore there

must be something to give witness to faith, before the case be resolved by faith itself.

I answer, Wherever there is receiving of Christ indeed, there cannot be presumption in that act; let the person be what he will, if there be but a real receiving, and true believing; for the text saith, "As many as believe in his name, he gave them right to be the sons of God;" mark also what Christ himself saith, "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast him off." What is coming to Christ, will you say? Christ will tell you himself, "He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believes in me shall not thirst;" that which he calls coming first, he calls believing next; so that coming and believing are one; as if he had said, "He that believes in me, shall in no wise be cast away."

But you will say, I am such and such a sinner, such a gross, vile, and filthy creature, guilty of so many abominable sins; this is that which will cause him to cast off those that come to him. Nay, beloved, let me tell you, this is quite contrary to the text for he saith expressly, "I will in no wise cast out;" I say, even enmity itself, which is the highest pitch of sinfulness, is no bar to the receiving of Christ, or any bar at all to the enjoyment of his privileges in receiving of him; "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10

But you will say, if there be not fruits of faith following, that faith is a dead faith, and therefore there must be something to evidence with it, or else its evidence is nothing worth.

Beloved, that which is only credited for another's sake, hath no credit at all given to it: if a witness come, and swear clearly to a case, and his testimony will not be taken or received, except another come in and give testimony to him, and what he hath sworn; the first man's testimony is of no force, because it is not received for itself: so if faith be not able of itself to give testimony, or must not be credited when it doth, except something will come and testify for it, to give credit unto it, its testimony is of no worth at all.

Again, That which hath the whole essence of faith, is not a dead, but a living faith; now, the whole essence of faith, is nothing else but the echo of the heart, answering the foregoing voice of the Spirit, and word of grace. "Thy sins are forgiven thee," saith the Spirit and word of grace; my sins are forgiven

me, saith faith. And the soul that can assume thus from the Spirit and word of grace, hath the whole essence of believing: it is true, there are fruits of faith, as love, by which it works, and several others which are begotten of God, by his Spirit, through it: "For the grace of God that brings salvation, appearing;" that is, being apprehended by faith, "teacheth men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world." It is not faith that originally begets any grace whatsoever, but it is the conduit-pipe through which the Lord is pleased from himself, and of his own accord, to convey the other gifts of the Spirit. If, therefore, the echo to the voice of the Spirit, and word of grace, be the essence, nay, the whole essence of believing; this is certain, where there is receiving or believing, there cannot be a dead faith: the truth is, indeed, that faith that fetches its fruit from man's righteousness, is dead; for the ground of a lively faith, is goodness wholly without a man's self; that faith, therefore, that maketh any thing within a man's self its ground, that is not right: there is no believer but seeth so much filthiness, even in his own righteousness, that his faith necessitates him to go out of himself, and every thing in him, and to fetch all argument of good wholly from without, even in Christ the rock; so then, whatever faith builds itself upon, any thing within a man's self is a sandy foundation; the righteousness of Christ and not of man being the rock; for a man to believe, I am justified before God, upon this consideration, because I am holy, is to make a man's own sanctity the ground of his faith, and so destroy the nature of true faith. All men receive this principle, that the promises of the gospel are the grounds of men's believing, and they are nothing else but the free grant of God to men, of his own accord, for his own sake; now to turn the free grace of God, granted unto men, into the righteousness we perform in ourselves, and instead of making that, make man's righteousness the ground of our faith; what is this but to destroy the life of it, and so it must needs be a dead faith indeed?

In a word, to draw to a conclusion, I desire but this of you, if any remain unsettled in what I have delivered, or desire further satisfaction therein, I intreat them to set down in their memories, or notes, what I have delivered; and likewise to bear in mind the allegations and proofs I have brought for the confirmation of

the same, and I shall endeavour to give them satisfaction. For my own part, the Lord knows, all I aim at is this, That our God, in our Saviour Jesus Christ, might have the pre-eminence in all things, that not only our salvation and justification might have their rise from Christ alone, but that our peace of conscience might be fetched from thence ; and that he that gives to us the great things of the gospel, might speak the same things by himself, or by his Spirit, unto us, according to his word, and so we rest satisfied upon that ; if any thing swerve from this principle in all that I have delivered, I myself abhor it. To make the evidence of the Spirit, according to the word of grace, and the faith of a believer, no infallible testimonies of our interest in Christ, must of necessity produce this effect ; to rest and build upon our own works, and to give the glory of our peace of conscience and comfort thereunto ; but to preach that it is only these that evidence to us our interest in Christ, is to give unto the Lord Jesus the honour and glory of all, and to assume nothing at all unto our own works.

Thus, beloved brethren, you have heard the admirable grace of God ; oh, let not there be such a heart in any, as to turn it into wantonness ; oh, let not any one continue in sin, because so much grace hath abounded ; but let it teach you to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world. For my own part, whatever others may think, I abhor nothing in the world so much as this ; namely, a licentious undertaking to continue in any sin, because that such fulness of grace hath abounded ; and I hope assuredly, that the God of grace and mercy, will keep by his power to salvation, all those he delivers ; and that he will so sow the seeds of grace in their hearts, that they may not sin, that is, presumingly break out of purpose, in hope of pardon before-hand ; and I hope also. God will meet with such as are disturbers of the truth of Christ, and peace of the gospel, by their base and vile conversation. And I shall recommend to them (if there be any such here) the reading of the epistle of Jude, where they may see the fearful wrath of God upon such persons as abuse the grace of God to sin ; that because God freely pardons it, therefore they will sin, and presume to do that which is never so filthy. O, beloved, let not the love of the Lord God in Jesus Christ thus manifested, be so basely requited at your hands : seeing he hath so freely loved

you, and given Christ to you, that you might be to the praise of the glory of his grace, in a godly and christian conversation, whereunto you are ordained: "For you are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that you should walk in them," Ephes. ii. 10. And I beseech you always to remember, that you cannot answer the free love of God towards you any other way, but by shewing it in a fruitful conversation in the world; and considering that one end for which the Lord did redeem you, was, That you "might be a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14*.

SERMON XXXII†.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE, THE GROUND OF THEIR SECURITY.

ISAIAH xli. 10.

FEAR NOT, FOR I AM WITH THEE; BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM THY GOD: I WILL STRENGTHEN THEE; YEA, I WILL HELP THEE; YEA, I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the former part of this chapter, (which we will speak a little of, because it will make way to the discovery of the true scope of this text) you shall find the Lord graciously acquainting his people, concerning his mind, in sending Christ into the world, and what tumults this should raise; how the Lord repelled that outcry; what success he giveth unto Christ, raised up in spite of all the malignity and force against his power and glory.

And it is worthy your observation, beloved, to consider how the Lord manifests this as a preamble to this very text. In ver. 1, he seems to represent unto us the world, under the name of

* This paragraph sufficiently clears the Doctor from being a licentious preacher.

† Here begins the third volume in the former editions.

“ islands and people,” and to present them in such like posture as Demetrius and his fellows stood in, in Acts xix. upon Paul’s setting up of Christ ; there was a horrible tumult raised against **his** doctrine ; so it seems, the islands and the people, were in such a kind of posture here ; therefore the Lord is pleased to call for silence : “ Keep silence before me, ye islands :” such a noise there was, as I may say, that God could not be heard ; and therefore, first, he requires silence, and then, instead of that confusion that was among them, in respect of their madness ; he desires them to deal somewhat rationally with him, he chargeth the world to put out all the strength it hath, “ Bring forth your strong reasons, let them come near, and let us reason together in judgment.” Now, that which the Lord speaks, is as intending to hear what they could say for themselves in their opposition of Christ ; for so you see plainly in ver. 2, when the Lord had got silence, he pleads the cause of Christ by way of expostulation ; as if he had said, what madness is it in you, to set your faces against him ? “ For who hath raised up the righteous man, and called him to his feet, and given him to reign over kings ?” Why do you contend in this manner ? Can you tell who it is that sets him up ? If ye did but know against whom ye rise up, it would appear to yourselves to be a vain contention ; and therefore in ver. 4, he answers the question himself, and therein shews the vanity of their opposing him. “ For,” saith he, “ the Lord hath done it, who is the first, and who is the last.” If you fight with me, what will you get by it ? Be ye sure I will manage the thing, it is the work of mine own hands ; and it is I that raise him up, even to rule over kings ; and therefore you do but kick against the pricks, in your contending with me.

The Lord proceeds further, to shew the certainty of the prevalency of Christ here ; and in verse 3, he goes on to let us see, not only the facility, but also the extent of the prevalency of Christ ; both how easily, and how far, he should prevail.

This matter is of excellent consideration, “ He shall pursue,” saith the text, “ and he shall pass on safely ;” or, as it is in the margin, “ he shall pass on in peace ;” as much as to say, when Christ takes upon him to set up his own kingdom and glory in the world, every one that sets his face against him shall be easily destroyed : therefore Christ shall run quietly, and not after them too hastily ; there shall be such softness in the pursuit that the

overcoming of the opposers shall seem to be a time of peace, there shall be such little opposition to him.

In verse 5, the Lord goes on, and tells of the fruit of this conquest Christ shall have when he comes to reign in his church; the first fruit of it, is a terror to them that set their faces against his kingdom, "The islands were afraid:" then he shews what an ill use they made of this fear, whereas it should make them stoop to the sceptre of Christ; that was too hard for them: like malefactors indeed, when they saw themselves overmastered, they assembled, and gathered themselves together, they hoped to raise up more forces, and then try it out once more again with Christ. Besides, you may observe what a politic, devilish practice they use, to bring down Christ again, when he was raised; that which hath been the main and grand plot of Satan, even to raise up idols, and set them up by Christ, to steal away the hearts of people. It was the policy of Balaam, counselling Balak to lay stumbling-blocks before Israel, to entice them unto the idols of Moab; and it was the counsel of Jeroboam to overthrow the kingdom of Christ, to set up the calves in Dan and Bethel, that so there may not be a going unto Christ. So you have it in verse 7, "The carpenter encouraged the goldsmith," &c. Well, the Lord having thus discovered what opposition there would be at the setting up of Christ, begins to speak somewhat comfortably unto his own people: the opposition indeed of the world never stirs, nor moves God; because he knows well enough how he can blast every attempt; yet, because he knows that his people have some flesh remaining still in them, the appearance of a tumult, and the opposition of the gospel, may, peradventure, put them into an affright. The Lord therefore endeavours to hearten them against the frights they might take, in regard of the outward appearance of opposition; and this he doth in the words of the text: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God."

Now, lest there should be a mistake to whom the Lord directs this speech; for his intent may be mistaken in the extent of the people to whom he speaks; and therefore in verse 8, 9, the Lord shews to whom he speaks such encouragements: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, and Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

Some will say, it seems then, that in this text, God's speaki

THE GROUND OF THEIR SECURITY.

comfort, and encouragement, is confined only unto the people of the Jews, that are the children of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; and therefore, whatever comfort there is in the text, there is little comfort belongs unto us.

Consider verse 9, and then it will appear, that though God speaks of Jacob, Israel, and the seed of Abraham, yet he doth not speak of the seed according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit: for there you read, "Thou whom I have chosen, and taken from the ends of the earth." That Jacob, then, and Israel, to whom the Lord speaks these comfortable words, are the Jacob and Israel that are called from the ends of the earth. Now, if you would know what is meant by the ends of the earth, the prophet will tell you, in chap. xliii. 5, 6, 7, "Fear not, for I am with thee, I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, even every one that is called by my name." As much as to say, this Israel and Jacob, to whom the Lord speaks, not to fear, are a people gathered from the east, north, south, and west: now the seed of Jacob, naturally considered, is not of that extent, as to overspread the world every way: however, the last clause, that it is, "even every one that is called by his name," puts it out of doubt, that it extends also to us Gentiles.

This I note, beloved, that so we may not only have a guess that the comfortable language frequently mentioned by the prophet, belongeth unto us, as well as to the Jews; but that we may see that it is the mind of the Lord he hath revealed, that it indeed extends itself unto us; for by the way, solid comfort will not be raised upon mere guesses, or presumptions, taking things for granted, without the sense of a good foundation to bear up such comforts: all the comfort people have, when they run upon guesses, is only abiding with them so long as there is not administered an occasion of discomfort; but all the comforts in the world will vanish, that have not some foundation, when they are struck at, and when some tempest beats against them, to cast them down; and therefore it is good to be established in every truth, wherein comfort may be received.

1. From this passage, as it hath reference to the coherence, I may observe unto you, that, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is

set up in glory and beauty, he always meets with strong opposition; I say, the Lord Christ, that righteous man, was never raised up, but a storm was raised with him; there is an everlasting fighting against the glorious light of Christ's gospel, whenever it breaks out. You may see the truth of this, beloved, especially, since Christ's personal coming, at all times; no sooner did the apostles begin to preach him, as raised from the dead, but a madness and a fury grew upon those that thought themselves in authority, as the Scribes and Pharisees; their swords were presently drawn, their prisons set open, to clap up those that preached Christ; Herod killed one, imprisoned another, intending to kill him too: beloved, I need say little of this, your own experience may now be a sufficient witness of that, which, perhaps, you feared long before. Now is come the time of reformation, and purging of the church, of setting up the ark, and bringing Dagon down; you see the fruit of this; what combustions this hath raised in the world; let Christ himself be never so peaceable, yet when he comes, men will quarrel with him: therefore, by the way, as it is a truth in general, so it is in particular cases too; whenever we, the ministers of the gospel, devote ourselves only to set up Christ, and labour mightily at this work, we must expect to have the world about our ears; and for you, beloved, if you dream of peace and rest in the world, finding friendship and applause with men, while you endeavour to set up the Lord Christ, you mistake yourselves exceedingly, you must look for uproars, tumults, and clamours from the world, and there will be these continually attending you.

2. From the coherence, you may observe, as mad and as desperate as the world is, and the enemies of Christ are, in fighting and making opposition against him, yet no weapons formed in this kind shall prosper. "The Lord hath raised him up, (saith the text) and he shall rule over the heathen, and they shall be as dust before his sword, and as driven stubble before his bow." I say, this shall come to pass, and therefore, it is no great matter how majestically the world looks, and how mighty it makes itself; for beloved, if all the world should combine against one person, that stands for the cause of Christ, rather than Christ should sink, this person should be able to withstand even the whole world. But however, let that person be borne

down to the ground, or over-borne with the world, Christ shall never be over-borne; he shall reign in glory and triumph, not only in heaven, but also in his church too; when all comes to all, let them fight never so desperately, Christ shall be the conqueror; he shall pursue, nay, he shall pass on softly; he shall not need to take any great pains, nor toil, to maintain himself thus set up, and destroy his enemies, he shall do it with ease.

But this is not that I mean neither; I come to the text itself, which is a word of encouragement, held forth to those spirits that are subject to faint and droop, in respect of the afflictions that are likely, or at least seem to be likely to grow upon the church of Christ; "Fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I am with thee."

In the words, there are two generals very observable:

I. The temper of spirit that the Lord aims to reduce his people unto.

II. The course he takes to reduce them to it.

The temper of spirit that the Lord desires to reduce his people unto, is delivered in a double expression; "Fear not, be not dismayed:" they are both one, saving that dismayedness is the highest extremity of fear; so that, the temper he endeavours to reduce them unto, is a quietness, settledness, and undauntedness of spirit.

The course that God takes to bring them to this temper of spirit, is a proposal of motives and arguments of sufficient effect and prevalency to pull down vain fear out of the heart; "Fear not, for I am thy God; I am with thee," and so forth. The result of the text is briefly this; they need never be afraid, nor dismayed at any thing, though it appear ever so hideous, who have God for their God, and present with them, and a help unto them. Beloved, these are times (as I hinted before unto you) that require such a cordial as this; for now, in a more eminent way than ever before, is the glory of the kingdom of Christ contested, and attempted to be thrown down to the dust. Now, when we hear of evils, our hearts are subject to be dismayed, and especially when we see them with our eyes; the sword is drawn, nay, blood is drawn; the hearts of men are full of faintings, and many almost at their wits' ends; many begin to suspect what will become of things, out of the fainting and suspicion of their spirits; and therefore now, it is time to bring

forth, out of the treasures of the Lord, that that may stay the spirits of his people; that is, such an encouragement as he himself gives, which will be the best way in the world to establish our hearts; namely, when God will say to a soul, "Fear not, be not dismayed; for I am thy God:" it is a cup of consolation indeed; and, that we may draw it forth to you, with the better advantage to drink of it, let us take these particulars into consideration:

1. What is it, not to fear, nor to be dismayed.
2. What it is, that we must not fear and be dismayed at.
3. What the fruit of fear, or dismayedness, is; or what prejudice or disadvantage fear and dismayedness bring along with them.
4. We shall then consider the motives of the Lord, to take us off from these distempers of fear and dismayedness; namely, because God is our God; and in that, we shall consider,
 - (1.) What it is for God to be our God.
 - (2.) What strength there is in this argument, how this takes off fear and dismayedness. And,
 - (3.) Seeing there is such strength in it, we shall consider how God becomes the God of them that believe, that so you may see the way to enter into this privilege to have God for your God, and so to be secured from fear and dismayedness.

1. What it is for a person not to fear, nor be dismayed. I have observed, concerning all the passions and affections of men, that the sense of them far better opens their nature, than any discourse possibly can. When a fit of fear, especially when the height of it, seizeth upon a spirit, that spirit may read a plainer lecture to itself, of that passion, than all the rhetoric of men in the world can express; I mean, fear is such a passion, as every one knows better, by those experiments they have of it, what it is, than another is possibly able to describe. It is a very distracting, disturbing, confounding passion; it is a kind of besotting passion that makes men lose themselves, especially if it be in the extremity of fear; it ariseth from an apprehension of some unavoidable, insupportable evil, growing upon a person and occasioned, either by some symptoms of that evil, or by some messenger or other relating it, or by some fore-sight of it in the eye. Now, as evil appears greater or lesser, and more or less tolerable, so the passion of fear is more or less in persons. In

brief, I will give you but a touch of the nature of this passion, and you shall have it delivered to you in the words of the Psalmist, where he sets it forth by its contrary, by what it is not to be afraid or dismayed, Psal. cxii. 7, 8; "He shall not be moved, (saith he), his heart is fixed; he shall not be afraid; his heart is established." Mark the phrases, and in them, you shall have a full lecture read to you of a heart not afraid or dismayed. First, It is a heart that is not moved nor stirred; suppose evil grows on, it may be the sword, the enemy appears bigger and bigger; still the dangers are greater and greater; what is it now not to be afraid? It is, not to be moved at all at any time; so far forth as the appearance of danger moves the heart, or turns it, so far he is afraid: so the other phrase imports, "his heart is fixed." You know, that fear in the heart is often expressed by the shaking and trembling of it; and therefore the Holy Ghost expresseth it also by the shaking of the tops of trees; it cansteth an unsteadfastness of spirit. Now, saith the Psalmist, "They shall not be afraid, whose hearts are fixed;" that is, as a post that is set deep in the ground, and rammed in, stands fast, so that if you thrust against it, it stirs not, it is fixed: so when any thing beats against the heart to shake, and overthrow it, when the heart of a man stirs not at it, it is a fixed heart, and is not afraid. And so the phrase that follows, "his heart is established," signifieth, that it is made stable and firm, that it cannot be shaken. In brief, to have a heart not afraid nor dismayed, is to have a heart calm, that looks with a regardless eye (as I may say) upon evils when they grow out. You shall see, beloved, this affection, or temper of spirit, *not to be afraid*, in the sense I mention, excellently described unto you in Daniel iii. 16, and there, whenever you would know whether you be afraid or no, you shall find always, as in a lecture, the thing discovered unto you. You know what danger was in the eyes of those three children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; there was a hot fiery furnace prepared for them, seven times hotter than ordinary; the king proclaims, that whatever he be that will not fall down and worship his image, should presently be cast into this furnace; this was enough to startle a person, and make him tremble; but how is the temper of the three children expressed there? "We are not (say they) careful to answer thee in this matter." These threatenings, though very fearful in the eyes of

others, seemed but a matter of nothing to them, they made a tush at it. Even so, people are then free, who when evil is coming, care not for it; a man when he cares not for any thing that assails him, rusheth in upon it; and though it seem to threaten him some mischief, yet he is confident it cannot hurt him. So far as you can overlook evils drawing on upon you, more or less, not regarding them in respect of any hurt they can do you, so far are you free from fear.

You will say, none in the world can have such a temper of spirit, when dangers are growing, especially great and thick upon them.

No? What say you of these three children? I speak of men now, they were careless.

You will say, it may be, that was an extraordinary case.

Nay, you shall find, that the very ground of the undauntedness of their spirits, was the same which the Lord proposeth in this text, to put us out of fear. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us." The carelessness of their spirits was grounded upon a common principle of the whole church, and upon the same the Lord proposeth to all the rest of his people, as well as to them; they being confident God was their God, neither the greatness of the king, nor the violence of his threatenings, could stir them a jot; they were all nothing to God, who was their God, who was able to deliver them, and would deliver them. Their confidence in this, was that which made them break forth into this bold expression, "We are careless to answer thee in this matter." But now let us consider, 2. What the people of God should not fear.

What, to be afraid of nothing? doth not the Lord himself commend fear to men? Nay, is not God himself called *the fear of* Isaac? and yet would you make us believe, that we should have no fear?

I answer, There is a threefold fear; there is a natural, a religious, and a turbulent fear; a natural fear is nothing else, but such an affection as is in men by nature, that they cannot be freed from; such a fear was in Christ himself, without sin. A religious and godly fear, is nothing but an awful reverence, whereby people keep a fit distance between the glorious majesty of God, and the meanness of a creature, and it is opposed to sauciness; a turbulent fear, is a fear of disquietness; now all

disquieting fear, is that which the Lord endeavours to take off from his people.

Well, but what are the things, you will say, we should not be afraid of, nor dismayed at? Perhaps I shall pitch upon things, people are much afraid of, and will think strange they should not.

1. I must tell you, the people of God, need not be afraid of their sins; and yet, let me not be mistaken, I do not say, they must not be afraid to sin, but they need not be afraid of their sins; they that have God for their God, there is no sin that ever they commit, can possibly do them any hurt. Therefore, as their sins cannot hurt them, so there is no cause of fear in their sins they have committed.

Some will be ready to say, this is strange; all the evils in the world that come, grow up from the sinfulness of men. If a man be afraid of any thing, he should be afraid of sin, from whence all evils flow.

I answer, beloved, it is true, sin naturally is a root bringing forth all manner of evil fruit, "The wages of sin is death;" but yet, whatever sin in its own nature brings forth, yet the sins of God's peculiar people, that have God for their own God, can do them no hurt at all, and in that regard, there is no cause of fear from any they have ever committed. Beloved, I conceive this may seem somewhat harsh to some, especially such as misconceive the drift I aim at, which is not to encourage any one unto sin, but to ease the consciences of the distressed: I desire you to resolve with yourselves this one thing, so far as the Lord reveals it, so far you will sit down contented with his mind revealed to you; and I beseech you, kick not against the truth. There is not one sin, nor all the sins together, of any one believer, that can possibly do that believer any hurt, real hurt, I mean; and therefore he ought not to be afraid of them*. How will that

* This is condemned as an error by D. W. in his *Gospel-Truth*, &c. p. 181, though misinterpreted by him; for the Doctor speaks not of the natural evil of sin, and the effects of it, which he represents as odious; but of the penal evil of sin, and the penal effects of it; which the believer need not fear, or that he shall be hurt by it, even eternal damnation, Rom. viii. 1—33, 34; nor does he speak of sin before it is committed, smiling upon a man with a promising countenance, which is most dreadful and odious to the faithful; but, as committed, and lying on the conscience, as he afterwards explains himself; and so Hoornbeek, *Sum. Contr.* p. 714, and Witsius in *Animadv. Iren.* chap. 12, s. 6, both understood him; and in this sense, sin is not to be feared, nor can it do a believer hurt: that is, bring eternal damnation on him. Doctor Goodwin says the same thing, "If thou believest in Christ, *fear not sin*; for God, from everlasting, saw all thy sins, and yet for all that, he continued to accept thee in his beloved:—the

be made good, you will say? I will make it appear out of Rom. vii. 15—25: it is true, the apostle expresseth himself in heavy complaints against such sins as befall believers: "The good that I would do, that do I not, and the evil that I would not do, that do I;" insomuch that in the last verse but one, he, with much vehemency, puts the question thus: "O wretched man, that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Some will be ready presently to say, here you see plainly is a fear of sin, or ought to be; here is a body of death in men, to be afraid of. But give me leave to tell you, that the apostle in this chapter, as I conceive, personates a scrupulous spirit, and doth not speak out his own present case, as it was at this time, but speaks in the person of another, yet a believer: and my reason is this; because, in respect of his own person, what was become of his sins, was already resolved; therefore, I conceive, he acts the part of a troubled spirit, that in respect of the multitude and prevalency of corruption, was ready to cry out thus: but mark how the apostle answers this question, whether it be his own case or another's, for I will not stand upon that; and you shall plainly see he concludes, though there be such marvellous filthiness and prevalency in sin, yet it cannot do any hurt at all; but saith he, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," who will deliver me from this body of death: as much as to say, indeed, till a man look to Christ, there is nothing but matter of bitterness and evil to be seen as the certain fruits of sin; and there can be nothing else, in regard of the evil that is to follow it. But when persons can once look to Christ, the case is altered. What doth he thank God for? That though naturally a body of death grew up by sin; yet there is no prejudice in this kind can come to him, through Christ. Now, that the apostle plainly means, that he thanks God, in that sin could not do him, or others, any hurt, mark how in this thankfulness he expresseth

reason is, because Jesus Christ is more beloved of him, than sin is, or can be hated by him; if sin should come to have more interest for hatred, in the heart of God, than Christ hath for love, thou mightest well *fear*; but he hath accepted thee in his beloved, therefore, *be not thou afraid*," Expos. Eph. Vol. I. p. 95. Yet, after all, I am of the same mind I was some years ago, that such expressions should be disused; see my *Doctrine of God's Everlasting Love*, &c. p. 15, and heartily join in the same wish with the excellent Witsius, *Iren.* chap. 13, s. 21, that nothing of this kind might drop from the mouth of a reformed divine; for though sin cannot do any penal hurt to the believer, though it cannot damn him, yet it may damp his spiritual joy, break his peace, yea his bones, interrupt communion between God and him, dishonour Christ, grieve the Spirit, and cause him to depart for a season.

himself in enap. viii. 1, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." There you see the ground of his thanksgiving; no condemnation to those in Christ. No, you will say, no condemnation in hell; but yet, as there are remainders of sin in God's own people, so there will be some evil or other fall upon the commission of sin; mark what the apostle speaks of it, in ver. 3, 4. Would you have the clear mind of the Spirit in it? There it is held forth; "The law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ, hath freed me from the law of sin and death: for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent forth his Son in the similitude of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Here Christ stands for the deliverance of his people from condemnation, and eternal wrath, say some; yea, but saith the apostle, we are delivered from the law of sin and death; what is that, but what the law may do to persons, for those sins which are committed by them? Now, what can sin do when it is condemned? It is true, take a traitor, as he is at liberty, he may do mischief, but take him as he is arraigned and condemned, bound and manacled, he can do none. Now sin is condemned to the believer, it can do no hurt at all to him; for what hurt can that do unto a man which is carried into a land of forgetfulness, to avoid further prejudice of such persons as are endangered by it? When men have been found dangerous unto the state, it hath been a common practice to banish them the kingdom, into a place far remote, where they cannot have any opportunity of doing any mischief, and when they are banished, they are not to return again, upon pain of death; now beloved, our scapegoat hath carried our sins into a land of forgetfulness. Consider further; suppose a man be entered into many bonds, for great sums; it is true, while they remain in force, such a man is subject to fear arrests; but put the case that these are all cancelled, that the debt in the creditor's book be blotted out; what hurt then can these bonds do a man, when the seal is torn off, and all the writing in them blotted out? If a man saw a thousand such bonds, in which he were obliged, it would affright him no more that if he saw none at all. True indeed, every sin is a great debt, and we commit sins daily and hourly against the Lord, and the torments of hell are the merit of the least sin in the world; for, I speak not this to extenuate

any sin, but to shew the greatness of God's grace, and to ease, upon good grounds, distressed consciences. Therefore, such as look upon these sins, as uncanceled, and these debts, as true debts, so long they may work a horror in them; but believers, that are the members of Christ, may read fairly all the sins that ever they have committed, also the desert of them, which should be executed upon them, if they were not blotted out; but mark what the Lord speaks, Isa. xliii. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name sake, and will not remember thy sins." Now, what prejudice can that do, that is blotted out? Every debt of a believer is cancelled, so that the Lord himself hath nothing at all to lay to his charge; for, how can that scorpion hurt, that hath lost its sting, and spent his venom in the sides of Christ, and left it there? "Christ was wounded for the transgressions of his people, he was bruised for their sins, the chastisement of their peace was upon him." Isa. liii. 5. What hurt can there be to whom there is peace from God, and nothing but peace? It is true, our sins themselves do not speak peace, but Christ, bearing the sin and wrath that they deserve, speaks peace to every believer, whose transgressions he did bear. Therefore, beloved, be not afraid, ye that are believers and members of Christ, of wrath breaking down from heaven upon you for such and such sins, which you have committed, for all your sins together can do you no harm; all the sting and poison of them were spent upon Christ. Mark that excellent expression of the apostle in 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" so that here seems to be a sting in sin, even to death itself: but mark what follows, "Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that hath given us the victory." What doth he mean? even the victory of overcoming sin and death. Though naturally sin hath a sting, yet there is a victory over it; Christ is the death of it, as he took away its sting; so that the sins of believers, set up to affright them by Satan, or his instruments, are but scare-crows and bug-bears; things to affright ignorant children, indeed; but men of insight, and understanding, are able to see that they are counterfeit things. It is true, before men come to see the light of the gospel of Christ, their sins stare in their faces, seeming to spit fire at them; but just as children put one of their company into hideous postures, and a fearful and terrible

representation, causing every one that knows it not, to run from him; so sin, as it is set up by Satan, with a terrible visage, as it were, to spit fire in the faces of the godly, seems very threatening and dreadful. But they are to know for certain, it is but a made thing, there is no fear from the sins of believers; all the terror of sin, Christ himself hath drunk, and, in drinking it, he, our life, was crucified; and in that regard, all the terror and hideousness of sin, as it is represented by Satan, is spent, and sin itself is dead. It is true, indeed, a living roaring lion is a terrible creature; but of a dead lion there is no more fear than of a stick, or a stone, to him that knows he is dead. While sin is alive, it is fearful and terrible; but when it is dead, there is no more terror in it than is in a dead lion.

Thus I speak concerning sin, not as it smiles upon a man, with a promising countenance before it be committed; for so it is most dreadful and odious to the faithful, as that which crucified their sweetest Lord; but as committed, and lying upon the conscience of a believer, endeavouring to drive him to deny the love and free grace of God to him, and the all-sufficiency of Christ: for in this regard, it is crucified by Christ, and so a believer need not be afraid of sin. Indeed, terrible it may seem to be at first, but without just cause, for it can do no hurt*. Therefore, the apostle, telling us of the "Hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and contrary to us," saith, "that Christ hath nailed it to his cross." So that the sins of believers are crucified with Christ; "They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." We commonly understand this, as if our mortification of sin were the crucifying of the flesh: but the apostle speaks otherwise there, and intends, that they, that are Christ's, are crucified with him; as much as to say, Christ's dying upon the cross for believers, became the death, that is, the expiation of sin for them, that it should be no more terrible unto them, nor affright them. I have insisted the more upon this, because, indeed, it is the root from whence all other fears spring; for, from crosses and afflictions, which come upon persons (of which we shall speak presently) they run immediately to their sins, and conceive that it is they that have put sins into them, and make them so bitter; still, therefore, they are perplexed with fears, as long as sin is upon them; certainly,

* Isa. xxvii. 3, and xi. 9, Luke x. 19.

some fearful thing will come upon them ; why ? they have committed such and such sins, these be the cause of their fear. But, beloved, either deny plainly that Christ died for your sins, that he hath borne the whole wrath of God that sin hath deserved ; or sit down by this truth, that sin hurt Christ so much, that it cannot hurt the believer for whom he died.

2. As we should not fear our own sins, being believers, and members of Christ ; so neither ought we to fear the sins of others.

You will say, supposing there be no sins of our own to pull down judgments, yet the world is full of iniquity, and abundance of sins there are, that bring down wrath from heaven.

Though it be true, that national sins bring down national judgments and wrath : yet, all the sins of the times, cannot do a member of Christ a jot of hurt ; and therefore, as they cannot do him any, he need not be afraid of them. I will make it appear, that the sins of the world, the crying sins of the world, can do a believer no hurt at all ; mark the plea of the Lord, often mentioned in Ezek. xviii. 3, 4, against the people that hit him in the teeth, as if he were unjust ; “ The fathers (say they) have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” He pleads his own innocency in it, and directly answers, that “ the soul that sinneth shall die ;” as much as to say, he that commits the fault, shall bear the burthen of it ; thou, that art not the committer of the fault, shalt not bear the burthen of it. Therefore the sins of the times that are committed by the wicked, cannot do God’s people any hurt : the children’s teeth shall not be set on edge.

But will some say, I have had some hand in these sins, I did not reprove them ; or, I did not separate myself from them.

I answer, Suppose the members of Christ are in some sort accessory to these sins, yet so far as you, in your own persons, have been actors, or partakers of these transgressions, Christ hath borne them, and suffered for them. It is not some sins that Christ bears, and leaves some for believers to bear, and so also leaves some punishment for them to suffer ; for he, “ the Lamb of God, takes away the sins of the world ;” and, that he takes them all away, appeareth, 1 John i. 7, “ The blood of Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sins.” Whether then you consider every elect person, as he sinneth by himself, or as he

shareth with others, all these sins the blood of Christ cleanseth him from ; and therefore, I say, the sins of other people, shall not, they cannot, be imputed to him that is a believer.

But you will say, surely the Lord sends crosses and afflictions upon his own people (as well as upon the people of the world) many times, and should we not therefore be afraid of them ?

Therefore, let me tell you, as there is no occasion, or need ; nay, as people ought not to be afraid for the sins of others, so ought not they to be afraid for the chastisements of the Lord upon them. Consider but the true nature of fear ; look upon things as they are in themselves ; if there be occasion of fear in any thing that may come, there must be evil in these afflictions, or else there need not be fear : now there is no evil in them, but all are exceeding good, and they work for good ; and that that works for good, is not evil ; every agent produceth effects answerable to its own nature ; an evil tree brings forth no good fruit, nor a good tree evil fruit ; so then, if there be nothing but good in all the afflictions of the people of God, then there is no cause of fear ; there is an apprehension of evil in a thing, if there be fear, but there is not a just one in a thing that is good ; be assured of this, there is no fear to be had of afflictions, let them be ever so tart, great, or many. Oh, saith one, I shall be undone, as others are, that are plundered ; here the heart is disturbed, and distracted. But, beloved, suppose you lose all that you have, even the wife out of your bosom, and your children out of your arms, and so you be deprived of all, yet there is no evil in them, and therefore you ought not to be afraid. There is nothing but good in them : the apostle in Heb. xii. 11, tells us, that it is true, “ for the present, no affliction seems joyous, but grievous ;” yet he takes away all occasions of fear, though for the present they seem evil ; “ yet afterwards, (saith he), they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised therewith.” What hurt is in them, when they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness ? In afflictions, they are refined as silver and gold. What hurt is there to silver in the fire, when nothing is intended but the separation of the dross from it ? When the Lord afflicts his people, he sits as a refiner to take away the dross ; the afflictions of God’s people are nothing but the refinings of God, to take away the rust : what hurt is there in physic, especially

good, when the body is distempered? They that know ~~the~~ benefit of it, will they be afraid of it, though it make them sick for a time? It is true, ignorance and suspicion of the operation, will make men afraid; but the Lord hath made it known to us, that all his chastisements are the fruits of his love, and this is the end of all, to take away sins: it is true, men need not fear that the sins they commit shall do them hurt; but the Lord makes use of afflictions, to purge out sin from the conversation, where it is a trouble and burthen to the faithful; though he doth not revenge himself of any sin before committed.

3. As we ought not to be afraid of sin and afflictions in general, so for the present we should take notice, that they that have God for their God, must not be afraid of men. The enemies of God, that fight against him, there needs no fear, either of their wrath, or policy, their menaces, or cruelty; there is no cause of fear of any of these: it is true, there is, doubtless, an implacable rage, and an unchangeable resolution of revenge, if possibly they could, even to bring fire from heaven, to devour the servants of the living God; but if their rage were more desperate than it is, there is no cause at all to fear; inasmuch as God is their God. In Psalm cxxiv. you shall see that there is no cause to fear, though there be ever so much evil approaching: which was made of purpose, to set forth this thing that the godly need not fear the fury of the oppressor: "If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up, when their fierce wrath was kindled against us; but blessed be the Lord, (saith the Psalmist,) that hath not given us as a prey to their teeth; our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken, and we are delivered." Here is fierce wrath, but yet here is escaping, as a bird out of the snare of a fowler; and how comes this to pass? The Lord is their help, and on their side; and if he be on our side, what need of fear is there at all of their wrath? "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain," Psal. lxxvi. 10. See what little cause there is of fear from the wrath and rage of men; there shall nothing but matter of praise come forth to the Lord out of it; wilt thou be afraid of that by which he shall be praised? He is praised by the wrath of men, and all the superfluity of wrath, more than is for the glory of God, he will restrain; the wrath that is more than for

his praise, he will be sure to keep it in, and that, that is for his glory, wilt thou be afraid of?

Moreover, as you ought not to fear the wrath of men, so neither their policy; though hell itself combine with them to lay snares to entrap the people of God, there is no cause of fear; let there be Achitophels among them, whose counsel is an oracle of God, yet he will turn their counsel into foolishness; their Lord confounds the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nought the counsel of the prudent; where is the wise man? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? He hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, as well as the weak things of the world to confound the strong: now if the Lord choose foolish things to confound the wise, or the wise things of the world to confound themselves; why oughtest thou to be afraid?

Also there is no occasion of fear (to them that have God for their God) of the instruments of cruelty; let them have all that cruelty itself can invent, fear not them; fear not their swords, their engines of war; what need we be afraid of that which shall not prosper? Now, the Lord saith plainly, that no weapons formed against the church shall prosper. You know indeed, that unto a naked breast, a sword is terrible; but where there is a coat of mail to fence off a sword, he that hath it, is, or need be no more afraid of the thrust of a sword, than when there is no sword at all thrust against him; especially when he knows his coat of mail is sword-proof, that it cannot pierce it. Armour of proof you know, will keep out a bullet; when a man knows his armour is of proof indeed, he cares not whether he hath a dagger thrust at it, or a pistol shot against it, or no; he fears not, he cares not: the armour of believers is pistol-proof, it cannot be shot through.

But you will say, many are slain; will you condemn all that are killed by the enemy, as not believers?

Mistake me not, I do not say they are sword-proof, so that the same thing may not befall unto them, as unto others; but only so, that nothing that befalls them, can be truly evil unto them; and in respect of the soul, all that the enemy can do, cannot destroy that.

Do you not see them dead, you will say?

But mark what the apostle saith, "Our life is hid with Christ in God." It is true, there is a natural life, that may be destroyed

as well as the life of a wicked man ; but yet the soul of a believer is not destroyed ; it is cannon-proof, all the devils in hell cannot destroy it ; “ Christ himself is our life ; now, when he shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory ;” so that Christ himself may be killed, before our lives shall be destroyed by the enemies. You that are believers have this advantage of your enemies the unbelievers ; you may take away their lives, but they cannot take away yours ; they have but one life, a natural life, but they that are believers have a life in Christ ; nay, he is their life ; he himself shall be annihilated before they shall : all the power of the sword cannot take away that life from you ; it is true, they may take you out of this world, and the comforts of it ; but know, this world, when the Lord will have the soul separated from it, is a comfortless world ; if he himself should answer a person to give him life in the world, when himself hath purposed to take him out of it ; that, and life itself, would be a hell to him. Beloved, know this, that the Lord intends only your good in all your changes ; and that which is best, he provides for you : though your life be taken away from you, where is the hurt or loss ? Consider it well, beloved, death is but the opening of the prison doors, to let you out ; it is but the arriving of a vessel into the haven of rest : what doth the sword do when it enters into a believer ? it makes but a change of immortality for mortality, of life for death, of strength for weakness, of glory for shame, of holiness for sin ; it doth but pull down a rotten house of clay, to give possessions of mansions of glory ; it doth but take persons from a cottage at will, to enter into a lordship of inheritance ; for it gives full possession of an eternal one. The sword that enters into the breast of a believer, doth but put him into the chamber of the bridegroom, and consummates the marriage of the Lamb to him ; it is the fulfilling of the great cry of the saints, “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly ;” and, “ I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ ;” it takes the bride into communion with her long-looked for beloved, and gives her possession of those things she longed for. While we are in the flesh, we are absent from the Lord ; we enjoy the vision of Christ now but in hope, and but darkly : but, “ when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have an house not made with hands.” It doth but carry the believer out of a barren, blustering, troublesome wilderness, unto his home, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob, in the kingdom of glory ; what hurt is there in all this ? Consider this, that when the worst comes to the worst, if ye should be brought into the greatest strait that ever man was in, when cruelty shall rage and swell to its utmost bounds ; this is that which stays up the heart, and makes the weakest spirits strong ; and the want of this makes the strongest run away : when a man shall think with himself, if I should be now thrust through by the sword of the enemy, what will become of me ? If I be not a member of Christ, I shall go to hell for ever ; Oh, how will this startle him ! This in the heart of the stoutest soldier, is enough to make him run away, have he never so much courage ; but when a man shall stand in the face of an enemy, and the bullets fly about him on every side ; and thus think with himself, what if one of these should hit me, what shall become of me ? whither should I go ? If he can but say in true faith, heaven is mine, and Christ is mine, I shall go presently unto God my Father, at whose right hand are joys for ever more ; I cannot have a better turn done me, than by one of these messengers, to be sent presently thither. It is recorded, that there was a man had a spear run at him, by one that sought his life, and entering, it happened to lance an ulcer, that all the physicians could never cure ; that thrust of the spear cured the ulcer. Oh, beloved, all the world is not able to cure the ulcers that are in believers, in respect of the cohabitation and practice of sin ; for sin will arise, and break forth, in spite of all the world, and they shall not cease to sin, till they cease to be here below ; now the sword that enters into their hearts at one thrust, perfectly cures the ulcers of sins that there shall never arise any more after ; now what hurt us there in that spear, that cures instead of killing ?

This, beloved, I speak to encourage all the faithful ; when the enemy looks big upon you, and your hearts are ready to faint, consider what the Lord saith, “ I am your God, be not afraid nor dismayed.” Sometimes I observe, people look upon believers with an evil eye, because they do not see them of such dejected countenances, and so full of fearful expressions, as is in themselves, or others : hence they presently censure them as void of sense, and full of security. But consider, hath not the Lord promised, that they shall not be moved with evil tidings ? Is there nothing in such a promise ? Will you say, there’s no strength, nor truth in him, in whom is the fulness of all ?

when you find such undauntedness in any, that when men speak of fire and sword, and the cruelty of the enemy, say, "We are careless, as touching this matter;" you say, they are stupified, or carnally secure, do you not therein charge the three children for the same? Shall the people of God, who out of the apprehension of God being their God, and out of the gun-shot of sin, say, we fear not touching this matter, shall they be condemned for it? They know wherein pain, misery, and death is, which thou art not sensible of: do not then condemn God, therefore; is thine eye evil, because his is good?

Now, what are the disadvantages by this dismayedness of spirit? There are three sorts of them:

1. Fearfulness of spirit produces a great deal of prejudice unto God; not simply to the being of God, but to his glory and honour; it casts many slanders upon him.

1. Upon his power. 2. Upon his faithfulness. 3. Upon his care and providence. 4. Upon the freeness of his grace. 5. Upon the efficacy of the sufferings of Christ.

To touch of these a little, which, by the grace of God, may quit your hearts of these fears.

1. It casts a slander upon the power of God: if you lend a man an hundred pounds, and he give you a bond to pay it you again, it may be, you fear you shall not have it again; what is the ground of it? I doubt, say you, he will not be able to pay me: when fear ariseth from such a principle, doth not this cast an aspersion upon the ability of the man? If you thought he were an able man indeed you would not suspect him; so when you see such and such evils growing towards you, and you begin to be afraid, and to cry out, doubtless I shall sink under them, God is not able to deliver me at such a time; I say, unbelief of the power of God, being the occasion of such fear, thereby casts an heavy slander upon him.

But some may say, I never doubted of the ability of God.

If you do not, yet Israel did; "Can God, (say they,) give flesh in the wilderness?" And consider with yourselves, how often it hath been in the hearts of people, when they have been in any great extremity; How shall we escape? there is no possibility for us to avoid this evil: is not this now a calling in question the power of God? If so, then there is a great scandal cast upon it.

2. It likewise brings a scandal on the faithfulness and truth of God. Some will say, I do not question whether God can do this, but all my fear is, whether he will do it or no; this ariseth from a suspicion, that God will not do it: now I ask, hath he said, he will do it? Hath he said, “I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee? That all things shall work together for our good?” And do you fear he will not do it? What do you think of God? Is he not as good as his word? Are God and his faithfulness out of credit with you? Hath he said, and will not he perform? If a man hath promised to give you an hundred pounds, and when he is gone, you fear you shall never have it; do you not call in question the honesty of this man? do you not make him a liar? Hath not God promised to save and defend you: to be your shield and buckler? now you by fear calling this in question, is this any better, than to charge him with dishonesty? and to make him a liar, that he hath said, and will not make good what he hath said?

3. You charge the providence and care of God: you know what he hath said, “Be careful for nothing, but in all things make your requests known to him:” and “cast your care upon him, for he careth for you:” do you think he is mindful of you, and cares for you, when extremity of danger comes upon you, and you fear you shall miscarry in such danger? either you think that he doth not mind you, or if he doth, he is not able to help you. This was David’s fault, he runs on in this manner: “Hath he forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? will he be favourable no more?” He charged God with forgetfulness.

4. You cast a scandal upon the free grace of God, when thus afraid; thy fear is, that such an evil will overtake thee; and withal, thou lookest upon thy deserts, and sayest, This may well come upon me, I have deserved it; I have committed such and such sins, and they will certainly provoke the Lord to send all these evils I fear upon me: because thou hast sinned, thou fearest such punishments will come upon thee; consider, how thou slanderest the freeness of the grace of God; there is no avoiding of evil, sayest thou, because sin hath been committed; yet herein grace indeed consists, that though it be, yet no wrath shall be provoked, nor punishment inflicted; so often as you fear afflictions from sins committed, you slander the grace of God:

there is no way for me to escape, for I have sinned, think you. When a scholar comes home to his father, and cries, I have committed a fault, there is no escaping the rod, for every fault I commit, I shall be whipped; is not this to cast a scandal upon the clemency of the master, as if he were so rigid, that he would pass by no fault? If you upon sin committed, fear wrath and judgment, what do you think of God? Do you not plainly declare, that there is no clemency in him?

5. You cast a slander upon the sufferings of Christ, that fear wrath, because you have committed such and such a sin; beloved, to what purpose are they? Were they not for the sins of all the elect? Did the Lord behold the travail of his soul, and was he satisfied? and, will he come and exact a new payment, after satisfaction given and acknowledged? Either God must be dishonest, to exact payment twice for one debt, or Christ's satisfaction was insufficient? If he did not bear all the wrath of God, but you must bear some of it yourselves, where is the efficacy of his sufferings? If they were sufficient, wherefore should you then fear any wrath at all? Certainly, you must either say, Christ hath not borne all indignation, and so make the scripture a liar, which saith, "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," and his sufferings of none effect; or else, though sin hath been committed, you cannot fear wrath, or any evil, as the effect of it.

The second prejudice of fear is, as it respects God's service; it may appear divers ways to you.

1. So far as fear possesses the heart, so far is faith suppressed; it is the cut-throat of believing; "In quietness and confidence shall be your rest;" where there is rest, there is confidence; and where there is no rest, there can be no confidence; therefore as far as you fear the afflictions of the world, in respect of your sins, so far are you weak in faith; faith makes men sit down satisfied, whereas fear fills men full of doubts: when things are not clear, there are disputings, but faith puts an end to all doubts and fears; wherefore, so long as there is fear, there is unbelief.

2. Fear is prejudicial to all religious duties: it is a damper of prayer: beloved, you know, that the life of prayer lies in faith, "If any man pray, let him ask in faith," saith St. James. Faith is the wing of prayer, and carries it up to heaven; clip the wing, and the motions of it must be slow. Beloved, you

that are afraid, in such a fit, what hearts have you to pray? In brief, there is this great prejudice in fear, it makes all the duties that persons perform merely selfish. You know that a servant is very diligent for his master, when no danger cometh; but, let the servant be in fear of it, he will leave his master's business to shift for himself, and seek for his own safety; so, consider it well, whether your hearts are not for yourselves in your services, when there is a strong passion of fear in your spirits. When a man is in prayer, against some evil he fears is approaching him, what prayer is it? He is altogether for himself, that he may be delivered from his present fear; there is not a thought (so far as this fear prevails) that God may be glorified all the while, but only of the evil that is, or like to fall upon him; whereas, the believer should serve with sincerity and singleness of spirit; he should do that which he doth, as unto the Lord. Do not mistake, it is not the spirituality, nor fervency in the performances of duties, that carries it; duties are not expiatory helpers with Christ: but, when duties are performed as to, and for, the Lord, and not to, and for, a man's self, then are they right as services. But all our hope that we must have in any condition, must be only from the grace of God, and all that we act must be to him, for what he hath done for us. Therefore, seeing it is the Lord himself that calls upon you, and bids you be not afraid, take courage from him, and quit yourselves like men: in danger "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." There is this difference between God's call and man's, to do any thing; men call to services and employments, but cannot give them power to perform that which they are called unto; but God calls, and gives influence of his own, to make men do such things he calls them unto; the Lord saith, "Fear not," and in his voice there is life, to frame the same temper in your hearts. Christ stands over your dead hearts, as he did over the dead body of Lazarus, saying, "Lazarus, arise," who immediately arose; the word of his mouth carried life into it, and with it; so it saith, "Fear not," and it immediately takes away all fear from the spirit of that man he speaks inwardly unto; other men may speak, and speak their hearts out, and never the better; but, when God calls upon you not to be afraid, he is present in his ordinances, merely for his own sake, to hold out this undauntedness of spirit to you; it is now with you, if you embrace

it; he will make you of an undaunted spirit; he shall strengthen you as that leviathan the Lord speaks of in Job xli. which esteemed iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood, because his scales were so strong: know this, that believers are the leviathans of God, he will so steel their spirit, that they shall cut iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The Lord is able to put such a spirit into you, and he will make good his promise, wherein he hath engaged himself, that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness; therefore, though you have said, My strength faileth me, yet he shall be the strength of your hearts, and your portion for ever; thus you shall give that to him that fearful men rob him of, that is, the glory of his power, faithfulness, the freeness and riches of his grace, and care of his people's welfare, and Christ of his sufficiency; wherein he hath promised plentifully to supply you with all spiritual strength, that you "shall run, and not be weary, walk and not faint." In a word, there are a few civil respects that I will mention as motives against this fear; I will but touch them.

Know, fear, especially dismayedness, puts a man besides his wits, that while he is in such a passion, he is to seek for common ways of safety; so that, whereas men think that fear will help them to avoid danger, commonly, in amazement, you shall have people stand still, not able to stir to save themselves. Besides, this fear is such a torment, that commonly those evils so much feared, prove not so hurtful nor evil to a person as the present fears; and, besides this, it many times doth not only daunt the spirit of a man in himself, but proves very dangerous to others. You already have had sufficient experience, not long since, of the evil and mischief this fear had like to have occasioned in the army; a thousand to one it was, that the fear of some had not made all the rest to fly; and it was a miracle of mercy, that there should be so great a fear in the army, and yet stand so to it; fear, at such a time, is of a wonderful spreading and dangerous nature; fearfulness in one, kindles it in many; and so, not only men's persons, but also the cause itself, is hazarded but these are but low things in respect of the prejudice God himself sustains in the fear of men; therefore, for your encouragement, consider what the Lord hath in store for you; nothing he hath, is, or can give, he thinks too good for you, but he is willing to part with it to make you happy; he parts not with

his goods, but with his Son, for you ; nay, with that which is more, if any thing can be more than his Son, that is, himself. Will you now deprive yourselves of the sweet enjoyment of all these, by your base, unbelieving, and fearful hearts ? Rather let us freely receive, thankfully acknowledge, and confidently rest upon our Father's abundant mercy expressed in so many blessings ; but, especially, in the gift of his only Son, given unto us, " That we might serve him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life," Luke i. 74, 75.

SERMON XXXIII.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE, THE GROUND OF THEIR SECURITY.

ISAIAH xli. 10.

FEAR NOT, FOR I AM WITH THEE ; BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM THY GOD : I WILL STRENGTHEN THEE ; YEA, I WILL HELP THEE ; YEA, I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS.

UPON a like occasion, now offered, I have (peradventure, in the hearing of some present) made entrance into these words I have read unto you ; I shall give you but a taste of what I have formerly spoken ; so much as may serve by way of introduction to that, in which I mean to spend the remainder of this time.

The occasion of the words, you may see in the former part of this chapter. At this instant, was a great tumult, upon raising of the righteous man from the east, that is, the setting up of Christ : such a noise that God was fain to call for silence, and then for their plea, verse 1, if they had any thing to say against this, to bring their strongest reasons. Having obtained silence,

the Lord makes his plea against their tumultuous opposition, ver. 2; "Who is he that raised him up, and hath given nations to him, and made him to rule over kings? I, the Lord, did it," ver. 4. What have you to say to me? He shall prosper with ease, he shall go softly, he shall never run for fear of being circumvented; "He shall go in a way that his foot hath not trod before;" he shall go further than he hath gone; and what say they to this, when God speaks? Yet the tumultuous men will not be quiet, they consult to find out help; nay, they conspire, the carpenter and the smith.

Now, because there is such a combustion when Christ is set up, lest the people of the Lord should be possessed with fear of miscarriage, he turns his speech to them; "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." Christ whenever he is exalted, did, doth, and will, find great opposition; but, in spite of all, he shall prosper, all opposition shall not hinder; nay, he will go softly, that the world may see that he is not afraid of any whatsoever. In this text, the Lord is pleased to provide a pillow (as for a king) for the heads of his people, or a staff for their trembling hands, to support their sinking spirits; they are apt to be discouraged; it seems the Lord is pleased to take their condition into his hand, to speak to the occasion of their trembling, and to give out such words that may be a stay, that they may stand fast, though blusterings grow greater than they are.

The text is nothing else but a gracious encouragement, or a comfortable support of a sinking spirit; the encouragement is, "Fear not, be not dismayed;" the arguments by which he would prevail with them not to fear, nor be dismayed, are, "I am with thee; I am thy God: I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The point is this; that they that have God for their God, need never fear, nor be dismayed; seeing he is with them, will help them, strengthen them, and uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness.

Concerning this fear and dismayedness we spake largely the last time we spake upon this occasion. 1. What it is, not to be afraid. 2. What we are not to be afraid of. 3. What the inconveniences of such fear are.

1. In brief, not to fear, is no more but a composedness, against any evil that cometh. Excellent is that expression, in *Psal.*

cxii. 8; "They shall not be afraid of evil tidings." Why? *Their heart is fixed*, established, they shall not be removed. Here is the expression of a fearless heart, a heart fixed, established, and not moved. You have it likewise excellently set out in Daniel iii. 16, in the story of the three children, being sentenced to be cast into the fiery furnace; they came before the great King Nebuchadnezzar, and he spake big to them, and tells them what they must trust unto, if they will not fall down and worship his God. Mark now, how their fearlessness is expressed: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter, our God, whom we serve, will deliver us." See what a disposition this is, and what is the ground of it; here is a true fearlessness, if when ever evil comes, men can say, it matters not, we are ready for it: and look into the root of it, and you shall find it in their answer; "our God is able to deliver us;" that made them so careless in so weighty a thing.

2. What is it we should not fear. I answer, (1.) Not God himself, as to do us any hurt; fear him with awful reverence we must. A believer, that is the servant and chosen of God, need not fear that he will do him any hurt. "It is God that justifieth," therefore will not harm thee. *The heart of God is to his people*; "My bowels are troubled for thee," saith he to Ephraim. Can he hurt them while he is troubled for them?

(2.) They must not fear their own sins; I do not say, they ought not to fear to commit sin, but they ought not to fear what hurt their sins can do them seeing they are blotted out. If a man have subscribed, and sealed an hundred bonds, and all these be quite cancelled, he need fear no hurt they can do him: Paul in Rom. vii. complains indeed of a body of death, and the power of sin; but in the close, he shews how little he fears any thing that sin could do; "Thanks be unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." What doth he thank him for? that though his sins were so great, yet they could not do him any hurt; nor any of God's people. Look into chap. viii. 1, 2, 3, Now, beloved, give me leave to tell you, if you be believers, and weak in faith, I dare be bold to say, nothing cuts the heart so much, in respect of fear of evil, as the sins you commit; these will be swords to your hearts; but if you be believers indeed, the sword is broken, the sting is gone; "The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, that he hath given us the

victory" over sin and death; so that we may boldly say, "Oh death; where is thy sting? Oh grave! where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. If you be the Lord's, and he yours, if you be believers, you may triumph as the apostle doth; it is you; nay, "Oh death! (saith the Lord, in the prophecy of Hosea) I will be thy destruction." I beseech you, give not ear, either to Satan, or to whatsoever instrument he hath, that would possess you, that though Christ died for you, and bore your sins himself upon the cross, or on the tree, (as the apostle Peter expresseth) yet those same sins will do you hurt, and prove a mischief to you. I say, there cannot be a greater affront offered unto Christ, than to make the believer conceive that he was not able to bear their sins, nor the wrath of God sufficiently for them, but that they must be wounded, notwithstanding all that he hath done. If Christ be hurt as much as sin can hurt him, how can any man be hurt by it, for whom he suffered? If he upon the cross took the sting out of it, and carried it to his own grave, how cometh it to have a new one? Or did he die in vain? If he took away the sting of one sin, and not another, there were need of another Christ, it seems, to take away that that is behind, and so Christ hath not perfected for ever them that are sanctified: I desire you to hear with patience; this is the first ground of all your comfort in affliction, that sin is gone; for then all afflictions in the world cannot give discomfort, seeing all arise from sin, the sting of affliction. Hereupon the apostle triumpheth, "Who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who can condemn?" Contrarywise, the soul is in the greatest bitterness, when sin remains, and the sting of it is not taken away, but when God is reconciled, as he is to the faithful, and sin not imputed; see 2 Cor. v. 19, how can sin do hurt, when it is not be imputed? God uses to reckon when he takes payment; if he doth not reckon with men, he will never smite them with wrath; as is the wrath, so must be the hurt that person is to sustain, in respect of sins committed: chastise he doth indeed, for special ends, but the sin doth not at all hurt; and though the Lord afflicts, that will do you no hurt neither; afflictions are his physic, to purge the conversation: will a man think, that is ready to die of the stone, or wind cholic, or stoppage in the stomach, if a physician comes, and gives him a bitter potion, that he does him any hurt, when he knoweth it is to recover his

life, and save it? he knows he dies, if he heals not the infirmity; God useth no physic, no chastisement and affliction, but it shall work for good; as in Heb. xii. 11; "No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; yet, afterwards, it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them that are exercised therewith." What hurt is there in all this?

But I must go on, and come to that which I have more particularly to deliver to you; and that is upon the consideration of God's motives, by which he attempts to prevail over the spirits of his people, not to be afraid, or dismayed, come what can, or may come; you know he is best able to persuade; he best knows what rhetoric will take with his own people: a man that hath had the training of a child, and observes the temper of it, can better tell, than any other, which way to win him: God hath the training of his own children; nay, he goeth further, he hath them at his own beck, and, therefore, can best tell which way to work upon them, and beget that in them, which he calls for of them. The Lord would have them not be afraid, nor dismayed; let him propose his way to bring them to this composedness of spirit; it is but presumption in any creature to conceive, there may be better ways to work upon the spirits of men, than that which God prescribes: and it is worth your observation to consider, that when the Lord puts his people upon such a spirit, he doth not say, you have fasted, prayed, forsaken your sins, denied yourselves, and walk holily with me, and therefore, fear you not; he hath higher propositions, that have more excellent virtue to move his people; he saith, "Fear not, I am thy God: I will help thee, and uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The prop for upholding of spirits against fear, when evil cometh, is without a man's self, in him that is a rock, and unchangeable: the Lord doth not say, you change not, you continually proceed in holiness, and waver not, therefore you are not consumed; but, "I am God, and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." I say, therefore, again, if you would have settledness of spirit, you must go out of yourselves, and fetch it out of God himself; and I dare be bold to say, take all the comfort of all the world, of all the creatures mixed together; extract the quintessence of their excellencies, all these together shall never settle a heart, nor make it secure and free from fear, but only this, that God is

their God: and by the fruit of this principle, a poor tottering spirit is under-propped, with four pillars, at every corner one, as I may so say; or rather, there is one main principle, and three subordinate supporters affixed unto the main principle; for sometimes you shall see great weights laid upon some great pillar, and for the better securing of that which is laid upon it, some short pillars branching out from the main, spread out wide, and so upholding. This present discourse seems to be such a main principle, that is, God's being a God to such a people, "I am thy God;" this is the foundation, this is the great pillar: "I am with thee, I will help thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;" they are the three supporters that issue out of this main principle; for they are all but branches flowing from this privilege of God's being your God; these, I say, are sufficient to keep the most tottering spirit in the world immoveable, like mount Sion, never to be removed. I shall take the principal, the main support, into task at this present, and therein consider what excellency of support there is in it: "Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God."

In handling of this, that you may the better see what stability there is for a tottering spirit in this support, let us consider:

1. What it is for God to be thy God.
2. What a person hath in this, who hath God for his God.
3. By way of answering objections, shew how it is so well with those that are the Lord's, this being true, that God himself is their God.
4. How he becomes their God, and upon what terms.
5. How he will be found of them to be so, as he is become.

There are excellent usefulnesses, if the truth be well sifted, and dived into.

1. What it is for God to be thy God.

There is much in it, nay, there is more in it than is any one thing delivered in scripture; there is all in it that concerns the present and future well-being and happiness of a believer; all is in this one thing, "I am thy God." While you have all things else but this, you have but the rays of the sun; while you have this, you have the sun itself in its brightness, glory, and lustre. But to clear this thing a little, what is it for God to be thy, or my God? you must not understand the Holy Ghost,

speaking in the plural number, of the whole world ; but of all the members of Christ as one body ; the passage is to be understood distributively, of every such particular person, and so he is thine, and mine, and theirs ; “ I am their God,” is all one with “ I am thy God.” In the scripture you shall find a vast difference between God simply and abstractively considered, and relatively considered ; and that we must note beforehand, that you may know wherein the strength and comfort of this passage lieth. For God to say, “ Fear not, I am thy God,” is ten thousand times more comfortable, and hath more in it, than simply for him to have said, “ Fear not, I am God.” I say, there is far more support in this expression of him, considered as our God, than as he is considered simply and abstractively, without relation to us ; for so it imports only to us the incomprehensible, perfect, and complete being of God, as he is in himself ; but, considered in relation here, as he is thy God, imports to us, not only what he is, in respect of his absolute perfection, but what he is to them, whose he is ; so that the phrase imports, not only what God simply is, but also, that whatever he is, in, and from himself, the same he is to those persons whose he is. It is worth the observation, that the scriptures plainly hold out, that whenever the Lord is spoken of, in reference to wicked men, he is never mentioned in way of relation unto them, but only to his own people ; you shall not find in all the scripture, God said to be the God of any person that is a wicked man : but, lest there be a mistake, you must know this relation of God to people, may be considered either as common, or as special and peculiar. It is true, take a church, as it is mixed, so sometimes the Lord is spoken of in relation to them : as for example, in Exod. xx. 2, “ I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.” Here is God spoken of in relation, “ I am the Lord thy God :” and this seems to be spoken collectively to the whole body of the church, one with another ; but always observe this rule, where the Lord is mentioned in relation to a mixed people, that is, a church, consisting of mixed persons, all the privileges from such a relation of God, in reference to such persons, are but common privileges : so in that text, “ I am the Lord thy God ;” observe, he calls himself, indeed, their God, take them conjunctly, one with another ; but wherein their greatest

privilege was, which they had, in having him their God, he expresseth thus; "That brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" which was but a common privilege; and therefore, though God be said to be the God of people, being mixed, yet he is not so theirs, as he is his own people's, the living members of Christ: those that are mixed, receive some common propriety, or common things in that propriety; but they partake not of the whole propriety. Usually in scripture, the phrase, *I am thy God*, is spoken only to the Lord's servants, his chosen, that he will not cast off; and so it is to be understood in this text, as it is in the words immediately before it; for you shall see that God speaks peculiarly of his own elect people, and saith of them, and to them; "Fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God," &c. The Lord frequently expresses himself in this relation, when he comforts and stays up his people, as being the best motive that can be to uphold their spirits. In Isai. l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." Here is the very basis, the great pillar to bear up, even in a state of darkness; God is his God, let him stay himself upon him, because of this relation. Beloved, a man that trusts to another man's estate, trusts to a broken staff, as we say, and may be deceived, except that be made his own: a child of light can never be able to walk in darkness, except he have assurance that God is his God, by whom he stands: "God is my rock, and my salvation," saith the Psalmist, Psal. lxii. 2; "Who is a rock, save our God?" Psal. xviii. 31. So Thomas, not being present when Christ made it appear to the rest, that he it was that suffered, and rose again, because he would not believe Christ was risen, he received this check; "Because thou hast seen, thou believest; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed:" Now, Thomas having such a check, what had he to rest upon but this, "My Lord, and my God?" When Christ seemed to be angry, he closed with this, "O God thou art my God," thou canst not forsake me, thou canst not be wanting to me, thou art my own.

It will be worth the while to consider, what the Lord's being a man's own God is: the best way to set this out unto you, is to speak as plainly as may be, even in the most familiar way, by which you may reach some of the depth of this mystery. "I am

thy God," is as much as to say, thou hast a propriety in me ; or, I am as much thine own, as any goods, or any thing in the world is thine ; look therefore what difference you may observe between these two things ; much treasure, great revenues in general, and this much treasure, great revenue, and this land mine : I say, what difference you observe between these two particulars, things simply considered, and considered as yours ; the same difference there is between God simply considered and considered as thine. You know what difference there is in the spirits of men, looking upon things these two ways. There is this difference in outward things, a poor man looks upon the riches and honors of great men with a wan heart and uncomfortable spirit ; now the ground of it is this, he looks upon them as none of his own. Two malefactors are condemned to die, one hath a pardon sent him, the other none ; now mark how these two persons differ, looking upon this one pardon ; so are you to conceive of the difference between God simply being God, and being their God : he whose pardon it is, can say, it is my pardon ; oh, his heart leaps within him, having found a ransom : he hath received his life again ; his heart is taken up infinitely in the consideration of his pardon : but look upon the other man, he seeth the same pardon and looks upon it with a trembling heart and sad spirit : now all the difference of the case of these two persons, depends upon the propriety in the one, and want of it in the other : a wicked man may think of God simply as God ; but he can never say, (till he reveals unto him, that he is an elect person) that he is his God, and think upon him as his own ; see then how much thy case is better for thee to consider God is thine, than to consider him in himself, and how great thy privilege is of having him to be thy God.

But what kind of propriety is it ? I answer, thus much it imports, as much as when thou sayest, that such money, or land, is thine. If you will have the nature of propriety, the apostle, in Acts v. 4, will tell you in general what it is ; "The land (speaking of that which was sold by Ananias) was it not thine own ? When it was sold, was not the money in thine own power ?" So then, for a man to have a thing as his own, is to have it in his own power, to do with it as is best, and most profitable for his own advantage, to the utmost extent of the worth of the thing. As for example, suppose a man hath money in his purse, he wants

bread, his money is in his own power to dispose of for the supply of his want, and so, in general, he may make use of all for it. So, God's being a man's own, imports, that so far as God will go, as I may so say, for a man's use, and for the supply of all his necessities, so far he hath power with him; God himself is engaged to give forth himself to the utmost for such a man's good. Now, God's all-sufficiency reaches beyond all wants; so that he that hath God for his God, hath him for all the uses that can be for his good. If a man be many hundred pounds in debt, and hath land that is his own, he may make use of it for the best to make him a free man again; he may sell and dispose of it as far as it will reach, to pay his debts, and procure his discharge; but, if it be another man's land, and not his own, then he cannot make use of it to pay his own debts, but must remain as he was before: so the Lord is able to make up every thing that is defective, to all that have propriety in him; I do not say, that a man can sell him, but, I say, so far as God can reach, with his all-sufficiency, so far may I draw up from him, as from a well of salvation, whatsoever I stand in need of; the believer hath as free and uncontrolable right in God, being his own, as he hath in the money and land that is his own; the one is not more in his power than the other. It is true, indeed, a man may abuse his land and money, and so he may abuse God too; but using things as men use things that are their own, that is, for their best advantage, they have as much interest in God for the uses they have occasion for, and as much power with him, as any thing in their own power. When God gives gold and silver to men, he gives but some thick clay, but when he communicates himself, he gives all that he is; and he that hath God for his God, hath every thing that he is, or can do: God can do nothing in the world by his omnipotent power, nor devise any thing by his infinite wisdom, but all this is as much in propriety his, who hath God for his God, as it is God's own; his propriety in himself is but that he is his own; their propriety in him is, that he is theirs. All the difference will be this; God, in respect of himself, hath the disposing of himself by himself, and no other disposeth of him, but himself, as for the people of God, because they know how to dispose of him, as I may say, to their best advantage; therefore, he is pleased to give out himself according to their several occasions, as he in his wisdom seeth most conducing to

their good: as for example, a father hath an inheritance of his own; his child hath land by inheritance too; now, during minority, the child is not capable to manage it; but the one hath as much propriety in his land as the other; all the difference is this, the father disposeth of his land for his own use himself, the child hath his land disposed of for his use by the father; but, I say, the propriety is the same. So far as God may be useful for a creature, he is the creature's, to do good to it; I do not speak here, according to the foolish fancy of some, nor conceive as if there were a transmutation of the creature into God; but, I speak of him, in respect of usefulness for accommodation, so far as it is possible for a creature to have him; he hath made over himself in particular: man may have a propriety in God passed over unto him, as these good things of his that we enjoy, are not transmuted into man's nature, nor is it changed into that good; but so far as they may be useful to him, or conduce to his welfare, so far he may make use of them; so, when God is thy God, so far as he may be useful to thy good, he is as much thine, as any one thing in the world is thine. Be it far from thee, therefore, to think that God is able to do good in such and such a case, and yet I cannot, I shall not, have him for such good to myself; this man that so thinks, must needs conclude, God is not his God. Was it ever heard, that a man had money in his purse, and yet wanted bread, and perished for want, except there were no bread to be had for money? So, this is to deny the all-sufficiency of God, to think that he cannot, or will not, supply us with all needful blessings; assure yourselves, as God is your own, so as far as may be for your good, you have him as much as any thing that is yours; only you have not the disposing of him to yourselves, and for yourselves; that he hath in trust for you. And this will serve to give a hint, by way of answer, to some questions by-and-by. Thus, considering what men have, in having God; let us now consider what the treasure is, in having him to be ours. It is true, there are some things, in which creatures have the propriety, and yet are little the better for them, the things being not of sufficiency: a woman may have a propriety in a husband, and yet she may be a beggar, if he be one; she can have no more than he hath; therefore propriety simply, is no comfort, out the nature of the thing wherein there is. If God be an

empty and scant propriety, then there were but little comfort in having him; but mark, he that makes himself over in covenant, the God of such a people, is the greatest, richest, most incomprehensible treasure that can be. You have heard of some that have been raised from beggars, to mighty estates; they have been had in admiration, that they should be made so rich. What should the people of God do, if they were able to apprehend what infinite superlative treasure they have all at once, when God is theirs? Beloved, I conceive it a matchless mercy that he reveals but glimmeringly for the present, and some taste of the treasure that we have in him: for, certainly, the over-excellency of that fulness, he gives unto us in him, would swallow us up; we should not be able to endure the glory of it, if he revealed all unto us; and that is the reason we know but in part now, because we should be confounded in the knowledge of all that is to be known, and all what God is to his own people: there are three particulars whereby specially you may observe what great treasure people have, in having God to be their God.

1. In regard of the quality of the treasure. 2. In regard of the virtue of it. 3. In regard of the sovereignty, universality, and variety of help in it.

1. In regard of the quality of the treasure; men have many things, which may be of little worth for want of excellency of quality: there is a great deal of difference between a heap of dust, and of diamonds; he that hath one may be a beggar, and the other having the same quantity, is the richest man in the world; so we having propriety in God are the richest persons in heaven or earth, by reason of the excellencies that are in him. Some men have not many acres of land, but the few they have, in regard of the riches of them, are more worth than many millions of others: one acre, as I may say, of propriety in the Lord, is worth a thousand of the richest proprieties in the world; so rich is God, and every thing that is in him. All things that are given to enjoy, are but beams of this Sun of Righteousness; and if there be so much glory in the beams, what is there in the body of the Sun itself? David, when he considered the countenance of the Lord, and its superlative excellency, breaks out into admiration, Ps. iv. 6, 7; "There be many which say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou

up the light of thy countenance upon us; and thou hast put more gladness into my heart, than when their corn and their wine increased." Mark, while others look for goods, for corn, and wine, he looks for God's gracious countenance, and having that, lies down and sleeps, as one filled and satiated. There is abundance of treasure and superlative excellency in God; silver and gold are not to be compared unto him; nay, the apostle Peter, comparing silver and gold unto Christ, saith, they are but corruptible things, in respect of his blood; how much more is God himself, whereunto Christ's blood is but the means? now the means is subordinate unto the end for which it is a means; if then the blood of Christ be so precious, that silver and gold are but corruptible things in comparison of it, what is God, the blood of Christ brings us unto?

2. Consider the virtue of it; many things are of worth in the world, that are of little virtue in themselves; some are worth a thousand pounds, in respect of their value, but when they come to use, and to afford virtue, are but dry and unprofitable; they can never cure the sick, nor warm the cold, nor recover the weak; such are gold and silver in themselves, they can afford the weak heart no nourishment, they have none in them; a little bread in the house, in a famine, is worth a house full of silver; so God, being your God, if there were no suitableness in him, or fulness to supply your wants, then your propriety in him were the less considerable; but you shall find the Lord is not more rich than he is full of virtue unto all those to whom he is a God; the quintessence of all virtues is in him; all the virtues of the world are but beams, that proceed from him; they are but fruit that drops from him; he is the root, from which all is derived. The virtue of physic is more eminent in God that gives power to it, therefore, he must needs be instead of all these, and abundantly supply the want of all. It was an excellent speech of a woman in queen Mary's days, from whom, because of her courage for the truth, they would take away her bread, she answered; "That if they took away her bread, God would take away her stomach." There is such an usefulness in him, that he serves for all the necessities in the world: and consider this more fully, observe the variety of uses that there are in him, to all that he is a God unto; all manner of plenty, and variety, are comprized in him: reckon up all the wants men are subject

unto; many physicians and surgeons have dived into the various kinds of diseases incident unto the body of man; but suppose every creature should sit down, to cast up every particular disease or want it is subject to, or any one of his kind, it would make up more volumes than are yet in the world, by setting down particularly every defect, incident to the whole creation one time or other; yea, were the wants multiplied to infinite millions more than they are indeed; yet there is such variety of help and supply in God, and such plenty in all that, that there is no disease or lack, but there is a fulness of redress for it in him, especially to his people, after he is become theirs; for all this virtue he put forth in their behalf who are his, and whose he is, so far as it may be for their good. As for the quantity of goodness that is in God, the truth is, beloved, it is not to be expressed; the word quantity, is but a representative word to set out how much usefulness and help there is in God to our apprehension; for quantity hath dimensions and bounds, that are, and may be compassed; but there are no bounds of help in him; there is no want upon you, but we may say of you, as of a map, it may be but the breadth of a man's hand, and yet describes countries of vast circumference: beloved, you are the image of God, it is true, but yet, as in a little map, that hath the world inclosed in it; God is an infinite vastness, far above your capacity; be you as empty as may be, you are but as a nut-shell to be filled with the waters of the whole ocean, he is an ocean of goodness; to fill you up with this, is to fill up a nut-shell with the sea; the Lord is so full, that much of his fulness goes by a flood-gate as I may so speak, because there is more than will run through thy mill; but still there is as much as will fill it, and keep it in a perpetual motion: art thou sick or poor? God hath health and wealth in him; art thou in any extremity? he is the God of all consolation; art thou at thy wit's ends? his wisdom is infinite; art thou weak? he is omnipotent; there is no disease nor infirmity, but remedy is most plentiful with him.

But some will say, Is the propriety such in God, and is he so abundant to those that have it in him? How cometh it then to pass, that those whose God he is, are so far to seek as they are, for many things that he can supply them with? How many are the complaints of things they want, that God could supply? It

seems therefore, that there is not such propriety as that he is, or may be so useful to them, that they have power of it.

For answer, let me tell you, that there is nothing in God, wherein he may be useful for the good of his people, but he pours out himself, and is never lacking to them; there is nothing they complain of, that God doth not afford them out of himself; but it is not good for them, that they should always have those things, which they think they want; it is no infringing of propriety, to withhold from a man some things, at sometimes, that are his own: as for instance, suppose a man be in a desperate humour to draw his own sword to run himself through; he is but a sorry friend, that will let a man have it to do himself a mischief: suppose a father of an unthrifty son had an estate of his in his hands; because it is his, were it wisdom in the father to let him have the disposing of it, to waste it unprofitably? were it not the property of a wise father to keep it for better uses for his son? There is nothing that the Lord doth hold from his own people, to whom he gave up himself, but that which in the use thereof would do them more hurt than good.

Yea, but you will say, you do not speak of such things that God might afford, that will do us hurt, but to those that he hath given himself unto, there are wanting many things that would be very good for them; they are very much distressed, and God hath in him that which will ease them; they seek to him for it, and they cannot find redress though it be in God; if he be so beneficial, then why cannot they have what is good for them out of him?

I answer, There is nothing that is good, but you have it out of him: let me tell you, beloved, you are not always fit to be judges what is good for you, of those things that God hath in store. A man may be in a distemper, and may judge amiss; you know, when a man is sick of an ague, he may exceedingly desire drink, he may shake, and ask for that that is his own; and yet for all this, it is a loving wife's duty to keep it from him, till the wise physician permit; thus would it be with us. If the Lord should give us those things that we think good, we should soon bring an old house over our heads, as they say.

But some will say, there are things that are good for me, and I have them not.

Let them be what you can imagine, let others judge so as well

as you ; yet I shall stand to this, as I said before, and make it good, that there is nothing in the world that is truly good for the faithful, that God withholds from them, to whom he hath given himself; let it be never so special a gift, it is not good at that time, for that person from whom it is withheld: for instance, some will say, the thing I want is, I have a stony heart, and fain would I have a heart of flesh. I have a dead and wandering spirit in God's service, and fain would I have a settled spirit; fain would I have a cheerful heart, and free spirit, are not these good for me, will you say? And yet I seek God for these many times, and having God, they are mine own it seems, because they are in him, and he himself is mine: how can he be said to be my God, and all he is, and hath, to be mine, and I cannot come at these good things which are in him, and are so needful for me?

I answer, That God in giving himself unto persons, gives himself to be communicated unto them at sundry seasons, and in divers kinds and measures, and yet so, that he will be judge of the fitness of the time. The question then will be this; is it softness, or more softness of heart you seek for? Is it a largeness, or more largeness of heart you seek? I mean this, that which you seek and enquire after from God as your God; is it something you have nothing of? or, is it for more of something you have already? If you say, it is something I have nothing at all of; I have a stony heart, and no softness at all in it; that is false: there can be no seeking of God, where there is no softness, and all hardness; for he must first soften the heart to seek him: but you conceive there is none at all, because the apprehension of that which is wanting, and the want of that which you have not, swallow up that you have. It is more that you would have in respect of measure. But you will say is it not good for me, though I have a little softness, a little spirituality, and enlargedness of spirit, to have more?

I answer, you must distinguish time; God doth not see it better at this instant, that thou shouldst have more softness of heart than thou hast; and this I am bold to affirm, if he judged it were better, thou shouldst be more spiritual at this instant; beloved, I speak of a person to whom God gives himself, he would not withhold it at all from thee. Mark it well, you shall find, that all the spirituality belonging to a Christian is the mere gift of God to him, and only at his disposing; and without

the leave of the creature, he may make whom he will partaker of it, and in what measure he thinks meet; so that the creature can enjoy no more of spirituality than God will give him; so the covenant runs, that you may not think that your spirituality depends upon yourselves, and the putting forth of yourselves for it: "A new spirit will I put within thee, and a new heart will I give thee; and I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh; and I will write my law in thy inward parts, and will put my fear into thy heart; and I will be their God and they shall be my people, and I will remember their sins no more:" here is the conclusion; now, how shall believers come by it? must it not be of God's own good pleasure? and is it not as he hath freely passed the donation of it? he gives it, and he gives it freely; he doth not, in this covenant, condition with us in any one article, to get any thing to ourselves. Mark the covenant well, wherever it is, whether in Jer. xxxi. 33, or in Ezek. xxxvi. or in Heb. viii. where the covenant is again and again recited: mark it, there is not one clause of it that God will have us do this and that good; he doth not put us upon bringing any one thing in the world to make it up; for all that is required of the person covenanted with, the Lord is bound to make good all to him. Now, if so be the Lord did see more of these spiritual engagements requisite for thy use; he that hath made such a solemn engagement of himself, for the performance of all that is to be wrought in thee in the covenant, would not withhold that at this instant from thee; thou knowest not what a corrupt use thou, at such a time, mightest make of them; for some through more abundance of spirituality and spiritual enlargements, have abused them, to grow more proud and scornful; Paul met with such, to whom, being puffed up with pride, saith he, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? wherefore then boastest thou?" Beloved, your own experience may witness; you shall find some persons, more eminent in spirituality, have more abundance of pride: as for example, you shall find some excel in prayer, some in other gifts; what follows? the corruption in the heart of man gathers such corrupt inference from hence, that pride riseth in it, that another saint, because he hath a stammering tongue, though equally sound-hearted with him, is not fit for such a one's company. God is wise, he knows the measure and proportion that is fit for every member of Jesus Christ, and that he doth not

withhold. I speak not this with any intent, but that people should still rise to as much as can be attained, but that they still press hard to the mark of the prize of the high-calling of God in Jesus Christ. Beloved, when we seek God in his own way for increase of any good, for soul or body, let us stand to his good pleasure; and, for encouragement, let me tell you, if ever the Lord would have withheld any thing for the sinfulness of his creatures, he would have withheld the gift of his own Son, "but while we were enemies, Christ died for us;" would not God spare his own Son, but deliver him up for us all, while such, seeing the delivering up of him was for the good of his people? will he detain small things, in comparison of him, because of weaknesses in us? Mark the apostle's words, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not, with him, freely give us all things?" As if he had said, Thou, poor wretch, wantest such and such spirituality, thou seekest, and canst not find, and by-and-by crieth out, that such and such sins hinder God, that he will not give thee such grace as thou needest; and at last questionest, whether he gave thee Christ, or no; nay, when thou wert viler than now thou art, thy vileness did not hinder, but that he freely gave his Son for thee; much less shall it bar from thee those spiritual gifts that God intends to give thee. Here objections start up, this is the way to make persons slack duties, and be careless; if we preached, that God will not give till we mend ourselves, and leave our sins, were not this a far better way to put men upon it, than thus to preach? Let me tell you, we must not be more wise than God, that all, that the creature hath, might appear to be from his grace, and so he have the praise of the glory of it; I say, again, it is not sinfulness in creatures shall hinder God's communicating so much of his Spirit as he seeth useful; and he will take care they shall not take a licentious liberty to go on in sin, or neglect seeking him, because they know it is not their seeking makes God answer for what they want; for it is not your reforming that gets God to communicate more to you; but he doth it merely for his own sake, from his mere motion, out of his mere compassion, the riches of which was purchased by the blood of Christ; this is the only spring and fountain that brings forth to you the fulness of God in such measure as you have; as he is yours, so, whatsoever in him is fit for you in season; he shall cease to be his own,

when he ceases to be yours ; and, therefore, beloved, I beseech you, that you will not stumble at God himself, as if he were so humorous, that every little thing, (not that any sin is, in its own nature, little, but comparatively) every infirmity and failing, should make him pull his hands into his bosom, and refuse to give his grace ; the Lord, from all eternity, determined what to give to every saint, and had every act of every believer, before his eyes * ; so that, if they would have been provocations to him to keep his gifts, he should never have bestowed any upon him. But I must tell you, it is the foundation of all our comfort in all our failings in this life, that there is nothing that we enjoy from God, but what was appointed us before ; and no sin is committed, but what was, from eternity, before him ; and, if any sin should have hindered him, he would never have set down so fully and graciously what he would do ; so that if he hath already manifested the greatness of his love, by communicating himself to you ; assure yourselves, this being established, nothing in the world shall hinder the communication of any thing whatsoever, that may make for your good. Well, let us go a little further, and consider how he becomes the God of people : I must tell you, that for lack of clear distinguishing between these two things, how he becomes theirs, and how he is to be theirs, occasions a great deal of confusion in the minds of men, for these two go all for one ; but you shall see their difference, and the different principle from whence they flow.

1. How doth God come to be the God of people ? You will say, this is of great use, it is worth the hearing, let it cost what it will, to have God for my own : but, I say, there is no more treasure in him, for our use, than it is free to ; the gift of him, for our own God, is as cheap as it is rich ; he never looks the creature should bring any thing that he might procure it, but we partake of this merely and properly from the pleasure of his own will ; I say, there is originally, and efficiently, no other motive, or nothing concurring to make him our God ; but only that he would do it simply for his own sake, and therefore it is so. Beloved, look upon the creatures : God gives his image only to the sons of men, “ Let us make man after our own image : ” how doth man become partaker of it, more than the rest of the creatures ? You may plainly see there is nothing in man himself

* John xxi. 17 ; and xvi. 30 ; 1 Sam. ii. 3.

that procures this privilege to him; man was made but of one common lump with other creatures, even of the same materials that toads and spiders were. Now, that which was the cause, why man had the image of God, and no other creature, is the cause why believers have God given to be their God; and the reason of both is his good pleasure. It is true, there is a property of land many times made over unto persons, in respect of amiableness, or desert, conceived to be in them, and so it is conferred unto them: but in God's giving himself to the elect, there could not be such motives in them. The ground is this; if any thing could be a motive to the Lord, it must be the most excellent thing the creature hath since the fall; as fasting, prayer, mourning, weeping, self-denial, mortification, cleansing of themselves, amending, and the like; but it was impossible, beloved, there should be any motive, out of any of all these, for God to give himself over to them; for all these performances, and whatever else are in them, are but branches that issue from this main root, God's being their God. If they be spiritual gifts, they issue out of this principle; there is no man that believes, fasts, prays, and mourns, in a truly gracious manner, but God is first his God, and, being so, communicates these things to him. How can that then be a motive to God, to communicate himself, that is not in man till he hath done it? and, indeed, is but the issue of it? So then, it is impossible that God should fetch any argument or motive, to make himself ours, from what we do: and if we could do any such thing, yet there cannot be any moving power in such performances, to obtain him for our God; for in the very best of them there is unrighteousness, there is filthiness; nay, the prophet saith, "That all our righteousness are as filthy rags;" sweet motives to prevail with God, for such a gift as to communicate himself! No, beloved, it is not what we do, but what he in his own thoughts hath freely determined to do for us.

But you will say, Christ makes God to be our God.

I answer, beloved, in some sense, that is true: but, as I said before, originally, he doth not: give me leave to open this clearly unto you: for I must tell you, that Christ himself is marvellous wary, not to take to himself that which belongs unto his Father; nor should we give to Christ himself that which belongs unto God peculiarly, as giving Christ himself unto us. Christ saith, "Give to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's; and

to God, the things that are God's;" and this holds as true between God and Christ, as mediator; give unto God the things that are his, and to Christ the things that are his: for our Saviour, in John xvii. 4, saith, speaking to the Father in prayer, "I have finished the work that thou hast given me to do:" What work was that? see ver. 21; "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; so also they may be one in us;" as much as to say, that thou mightest communicate thyself to them: observe it, Christ professes, that it is the work that his Father hath given him to do; he did not put himself upon it originally, but the Father put him upon it. The truth is, the mere good pleasure of God, contriving and ordaining this communicating of himself, was the ground that Christ was sent into the world, that he was conceived in the womb of a virgin, &c. and the Lord by the righteousness of Christ hath actually brought all the benefits of the gospel upon us, to which end, Christ hath done this work: but the first foundation of it, was the thing by which he was Christ and mediator; and therefore he could not be the original of that eternal decree of God to communicate himself to us, for the execution whereof he was sent into the world. The schools have a rule, that the end is first intended, though it be last in execution; so this, that God would communicate himself to the elect, being the end for which Christ was sent; though, till he had by virtue of his death, made way, there was no actual communication, yet still it was the end of his coming into the world; it was in the mind of God, before the means were in being. Therefore, if you will have God to be your God, you must not think, that such and such things will make him yours. Nothing will, but his own free motion from himself by his son.

2. There is a way by which God is found to be the God of his people; now these things being confounded together, put people into a labyrinth, thinking the way to find God, and to get him, is all one; now, though it is the mere good pleasure of God himself, that bestows himself upon us; yet he is pleased to chalk out a way, whereby he may be found to be our God; and that we may find him to be so, we must meet him in those ways he useth to be met in.

But you will say, how doth God usually manifest himself, and how is he found of his people to be theirs?

I answer, There is an efficient and a passive instrument of

finding him out; the way of finding out of God efficiently to be our God, is the Spirit of the Lord, acquainting us with the mind of the Lord; he is the efficient; all the world is not able to work any impression upon the spirit of a man, that the Lord is his God; only the Spirit of the Lord, must persuade the spirit of man, to receive this principle: it is true, indeed, he doth it according to the word of grace, and speaks no more to the spirit of a believer, but what is in that; but the word doth not of itself work this impression, that God is my, or thy God, but it is wrought by the Spirit.

What serve all the ordinances for, will you say? is not here a crying down of them? There will be still this scandal cast upon us: but let me tell you, there is a most comfortable use of them, though they serve not such high purposes as these, to beget, find out, and reveal to the spirits of men, the things that concern God: yet, besides the efficient revelation of God, to be our God from the Spirit alone, there is a passive instrument, by which the Lord makes himself known to be the God of his people.

God makes himself known passively to be the God of his people, by the word of his grace, and faith laying hold upon it revealed, and more subordinately in prayer, fasting, receiving of the Lord's supper, and such ordinances, so far as they are mixed with faith. Now give me leave, in a few words, to communicate unto you the full use and utmost extent of God's thoughts, concerning the ordinances that he hath propounded, how far forth he would have the creature look upon them, and be put upon the use of them, so far as they are useful. Know, therefore, as I said before, that all these ordinances are but passive ways of conveying this great gift, the knowledge of God to be our God; I mean more plainly thus: these are only of, and in themselves, empty channels, through which the Spirit of the Lord brings from God himself, the spring, these riches, and conveys the same into the spirit of a man: look as a channel digged in a dry ground, is the way through which the spring conveys its water unto a cistern; the channel itself communicates none of its own, only it is a passage, through which the spring conveys its water; so are all the ordinances, even faith itself, prayer, and all other services, they are but channels, through which the Spirit of the Lord passeth, and bringeth from the Lord himself (the spring

and fountain)* the revelation of God to be our God. In all the rest of the gifts of God, which he hath so freely bestowed, never a gift of God's Spirit procures any thing of its own; our faith, fasting, and prayer, have nothing of their own, but as the Lord hath been pleased to make them to be passages to convey himself to us, and so they are to be made use of by us. And indeed, beloved, this is the loadstone, to provoke persons to the use of all ordinances; God hath ranked them together, that he hath so much, and so often promised, through them to convey himself; "You are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" as if he should have said, the Lord conveys himself, and the manifestation of his own salvation, through our believing; the Spirit of the Lord passing through the ministry of the gospel, as the breath of a man passeth through a trumpet; the trumpet is the gospel, the breath is the Spirit of the Lord; the trumpet adds nothing to the breath. Now know, beloved, so far as you will attend the ordinances, because God calls out to them, and because you have heard the Lord promises to bestow such things upon you in them, so far you shall attend them according to his pleasure; but when you ascend so high, that ordinances get things, then you rob the Lord, and give more to them than God hath given; now, though they have no efficiency of their own, in that nature I have spoken, yet there is good cause for all God's own people to esteem very highly of, and to be joyful, and to long much after ordinances, and make much of them; for the Lord hath made his promises to be found of them, and to be with them in ordinances. "In the day of adversity, call upon me, and I will deliver thee." And here, by the way, know from hence, what is the expectation of believers themselves, which they ought to have of the Lord, for such things, when they come to such ordinances, that so, when we attend the Lord in them, we may find him in them. In Ezekiel you shall find, there was a constant motion in the wheels, but it was because there was a spirit stirring in them; there is no motion in the heart of man, nor ordinances, but as the Spirit of

* Zech. iv. 11, 12. In this passage, the *olive-trees*, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full; are a very just representation of CHRIST, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible grace. The *golden pipes* through which the olive-branches transmit their oil, seem to be figurative of faith, in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a REDEEMER are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basins.—Hervé's Dialogues, vol. 3, letter 12.

the Lord is in them : the Lord hath promised to meet with us in ordinances, or else they would be as dry as any thing in the world ; therefore as the poor man lay at the beautiful gate of the temple, not because the gate would relieve him, but because it was a place of concourse, where honourable men resorted, from whom he might have alms ; so in the ministry, fasting, prayer, and all other services, there is the gate of the temple of the Lord, the place God makes usually his resort, and appoints to give the meeting ; therefore, in expectation from the word of his grace, that we may find him in ordinances, we resort to them. Now, what derogation is there all this while to them, while we make them but thus passive ? The richest treasure in the world may come to a man through the poorest vessel ; the treasure is never the worse, because the vessel is poor. It is no matter of what price the means of conveyance is, so that the thing we desire be conveyed to us by it ; only we must not give it that, which is above its due : to ascribe the obtaining of these things to prayer, and ordinances, that is to make gods of them ; if we think any thing shall move the Lord, but his bowels in Christ, you invert the course of the gospel ; the Lord saith, “ I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name sake ;” that which God doth to sinners, is done to them for his own sake ; he will not be so much bound to any creature, as to fetch the least motive from it, to do good to it ; look therefore, as you would speed, wait upon the Lord, where he saith, you shall.

And this shall be encouragement sufficient to wait upon all ordinances, where the Lord appoints ; that he will for his own sake give a gracious answer, and bestow all good things upon you, that you stand in need of in them ; this is motive sufficient, I say, to stir you up to attend upon them, and yet not make gods of them ; to ascribe that to them, which belongs alone to God, who does all ordinarily through ordinances ; it is the only way to disappoint you of your hope, when you expect help from them.

But what is all this to fasting, will you say ?

If you consider the nature of fasting aright, you shall find there is nothing more proper for this day, than this thing, God to be thy God, to keep thee from fear. What is the end of all fasting but this, to get a prop to support from sinking, by reason of approaching evils ? Who knows, whether the Lord

will repent and leave a blessing behind, saith Joel, when he proclaimed the day of a fast? then to find the Lord with his hands full of blessings, is the end of a fast. Now, if you will find the Lord your God, you shall find the utmost that you can in fasting; for in him you will find that which will support you, when greatest extremities grow upon you. Therefore, I have no more to say to you at this time, but only to commend this work to the grace of God, and to the power of his spirit, that is able to fasten it upon your spirits for your everlasting comfort.

SERMON XXXIV.

REVELATION OF GRACE, NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO SIN.

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU, THAT YOU SIN NOT: AND IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OUR SINS ONLY, BUT FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

OF all the prophets, Daniel alone had this prerogative, to be called, "The greatly beloved of the Lord;" and this greatness of his endearedness was expressed in the manifestation of the riches of the gospel unto him, in a more singular manner than to others; so the Lord expresses it by his angel, Dan. ix. 23, 24, "Thou art greatly beloved of the Lord, therefore I am come to tell thee, that seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and holy city, to finish transgressions," &c. And among all the disciples that conversed with Christ, this disciple John, had the privilege which Daniel had among the prophets, to be called, "The beloved disciple;" and as an argument of that, he is

admitted to lie in the bosom of Christ; and of all the apostles, you shall find none of them hit so upon the great grace of God to his people, as he doth; compare the gospel which he wrote, with other evangelists, you shall find a vast difference between the manifestation of the free grace of God to them, and to him. He also writing this epistle, follows the same strain therein; in the former chapter, he delivers unto us two admirable passages; the one is, "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all our sins;" and the other is, "He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins;" two great manifestations of the absolute freeness of the grace of God to the sons of men. Now, in chap. i. 4, he declares one main end, for which he publishes this free grace of God; "I write these things," saith he, "that your joy may be full;" implying, that there is fulness of joy in the grace here revealed; and it is fit, that little children that have fellowship with the Father and the Son, should have the knowledge of it for that end.

Now, whereas he speaks of God's forgiving freely, he would not have men mistake, as if his revealing pardon of sin intimated, that people did not sin any more; and therefore he anticipates it in verse 8, "If any man say, he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and there is no truth in him."

Sin we do, but the grace of God stands in this, that when we sin, it is forgiven, and it is an act of justice for God to forgive it. Beloved, I perceive the world clamors extremely against that, in consideration of the fearful fruits (as they conceive) of such publishing the grace of God to believers. Tell them their sins are forgiven, and whatsoever they commit, being believers, they shall do them no hurt; this is the way, say they, to bring all manner of licentiousness into the world; this opens the flood-gates for floods of sins to overflow the church. But the apostle prevents this great objection, and not only so, but establishes the direct contrary to the inference men make from the free grace of God; and this he doth in the words of my text. And observe it well, were it not an apostle of Christ that spake these words, there are many zealots in the church would condemn it, not only for heresy, but for the greatest absurdity in the world: this appears plain, for there are two things the apostle drives at in these two verses.

1. An enforcement of something that he would work upon

little children, as he calls them, that have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

2. The great argument he useth to prevail with them to embrace that which he would fasten upon them.

The thing the apostle would fasten upon believers was, "that they would not sin;" for which cause he writes these things to them: the argument by which he would prevail with them to do this, is a strange one in the opinion of most men; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," &c. Put them together, and it amounts to this; I would have you not to sin; now, the only, and best way, to prevail with you, is this; if you commit sin, there is an advocate with the Father, that shall take care that the sin you commit shall do you no hurt at all; though you sin, he is become the propitiation for your sins; therefore, fear not any hurt that can come to you by them; this is the argument by which he would prevail with them and us against the commission of sin: now, what an absurd argument seems this, not only to the world, but even to zealous professors also, to prevail with men to the forbearance of sin, to tell them beforehand, that if they sin, there is an advocate for them, and he is the propitiation for their sins? There is nothing so vilely calumniated, as publishing this free grace of God to believers, in this way, as being the high-way to break out into all manner of sin whatsoever. This, say some, is that which lets go the reins on the neck of libertinism; and makes men take liberty without control, freely to commit any sin in the world. Whoever is of this mind, I must tell him, before I go on, directly crosses the wisdom of God, and gives the lie to the apostle here, that expresseth, with much infallibility, how little hurt the knowledge of the pardon of sin can do to persons in Jesus Christ, in that he passeth it as an argument to prevail from sin. I beseech you, beloved, not to have any regard to any words I shall say of myself to you, but as I shall speak the full mind of the Holy Ghost; and I shall give you one point first in general, which is the main scope of the apostle here, and afterwards handle the several branches of it particularly.

First, I say, take his general scope here, and then, as the scripture will evince the truth, so for the truth's sake, receive that which shall be delivered, though for the present it may seem otherwise than ordinary

The point that ariseth naturally out of the words, is this : For a person, who hath fellowship with the Father and the Son, one of the little children, which the apostle speaks of here, to know, before he commits sin, that there is an " Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for sin ;" is so far from being a spur to provoke him to the commission of sin, that it is one of the strongest arguments, and the best motives, to prevail with him to refrain from it.

That you may see the doctrine is no fancy, nor opinion of men, but the clear truth ; it appears plainly, that the apostle's business is to take men off from sinning, " These things I write unto you that you sin not ;" and then immediately follow these words, " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." To what purpose are these words, if not as a motive to prevail with them to the thing he persuades them unto ? Nay, he tells us plainly, he writes them on purpose that they sin not. What was it that he wrote to them before ? that " The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin ;" and, " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins : " and now, " These things I write unto you, that you sin not." Suppose one man should come to another, and tell him, there is such a friend of yours, will do such and such good things for you, for he hath told me he intends it : and I tell you, that you may comply with him, that will do all this for you. Beloved, is not compliance to this man, provoked by the kindness revealed he will shew ? Yea, this favour revealed, is the spur to cause him to comply : so the apostle saith here, " If any man sin," &c. It is plain, therefore, that the knowing what shall become of our sins before-hand, that they shall do us no hurt, is not the opening a sluice to provoke to sin, but a bridle to restrain from it : for you shall find, by consulting the scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not rare, but very plentiful, in opening this very truth ; that the free grace of God and the security of believers from sin, are therefore made manifest, that they might not sin.

Look into Rom. iii. 24—26, where the apostle (after he had shewed the desperate condition of man by nature, in respect of what he himself could do) begins to relate the admirable free grace of God to men, even while they are enemies, and can do nothing that is good in establishing it ; and then he comes to shew, that this revelation of grace is a way to put them upon

more obedience, than if it should be hidden from them ; observe the words : “ But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe ; for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ; whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” Mark how sweetly and excellently he preacheth the free grace of God, concluding all under sin, and in a desperate condition in respect of it ; and then he brings in the righteousness of Christ, namely, free justification by him that is the propitiation for our sins. But now, what is the fruit of all this ? The apostle, in his time, found, that the preaching of this free grace unto men, as sinners, raised this very objection that is on foot to this day, and I believe, will be to the end of the world ; and, therefore, mark the last verse, (after he had ended this great discourse, and laid down his foundation) “ That a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law ;” the objection that comes in is this ; “ Do we make void the law through faith ?” Mark the expression, few will subscribe to this sentence which the apostle delivers ; that to preach to men (though the desperate sinners under heaven (there may be as free justification, as for the most righteous man in the world ; though by the deeds of the law there be no justification, nothing but condemnation by it, pronounced against him ; yet there is justification for such men, and this is the means to restrain from sin. **Why,** say some, this gives liberty to all uncleanness, for a man to know that notwithstanding his wicked estate, he shall be justified freely, and be saved, it is impossible he should miscarry. Who will not take liberty to sin, when he knows, that though he sins, and his sins be ever so great, all shall be done away, he shall not receive any hurt at all by them ? is not this to make void the law ; you will say ? Mark the apostle’s answer, “ God forbid ; nay, rather, we establish the law :” that is, the preaching of this doctrine to you that are believers, little children, that have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, will not make void the law ; you cannot take liberty from this free grace revealed. **The** preaching and publishing of this free grace of God, more

effectually wins believers to obedience and forbearance of sin, than any other course in the world that can be taken ; this, saith he, is a doctrine that establishes the law, and believers in obedience to it ; and brings them nearer in conformity to it, and doth not set them loose to the breaking and violating of it.

And so the same apostle, in chap. iv. and v. having gone on in an unparalleled way, in the revelation of the admirable grace of God to Abraham ; that he was justified, being yet uncircumcised, to shew that we are justified when we are in the worst of sinfulness ; and sweetly speaking in chap. v. “ When yet we had no strength, and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ; and, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son :” and, in the latter end of it, having shewed the free gift and grace of God to us, being considered as lost persons in Adam, in chap. vi. 1, meets with the same objection in substance, and answers it more fully than he did before ; “ Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid, (saith he,) how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?” The sum and substance of the objection is this ; Is there so much grace, that where sin hath abounded, grace aboundeth much more ? then it seems, that the more sin a man commits, the more will the glory of the grace of God appear in the pardon of it ; and so I shall glorify God best, when I commit sin most, will some say ; so that the preaching of the abundance of grace, where sin hath abounded, seems to let men loose to the commission of sin as much as possibly. The apostle answers this with, “ God forbid ;” as if he had said, God will never suffer any believer, though ever so weak, through any such truth revealed, to break out into sin, or to make any such abominable inference from it ; and, he also gives the reason, why they cannot make such use of the grace of God ; “ How shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein ?” To him, the inference seems so absurd, that he appeals to the adversaries themselves, how it can follow such a proposition. He doth not say positively, that they cannot live in sin that are dead to it, but he puts the question, how it can be ? And whereas some may answer, Yea, they may easily do it : no, saith he, they that are partakers of this grace, are dead unto sin, how can they live in it, when they are dead to it ? The glorious power of this grace revealed, strikes sin dead in believers, or rather strikes them dead to sin ; “ Sin shall not have

dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." And, as you shall hear by-and-by, the apostle makes the very grace of God to have that power in it, as to break the neck of sin in the believer. This is the most certain truth of the text, and springs directly from it. There is a death unto sin, where there is a revelation, effectually, of the grace of God to persons to whom it belongs. It brings a dart with it to slay sin. "The law of the Spirit of life, that is in Christ, hath freed me from the law of sin and death; and what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent forth his Son in the similitude of sinful flesh, and, for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" so that, though to reason and sense, the preaching the free grace of God to men, what the Lord hath done for them for his own sake, and that before-hand, may seem to be a licentious doctrine; yet it seems to the apostle, that there is nothing that more establishes a restraint from sin, than the manifestation of it.

In Rom. xi. 33, 34, the apostle tells us, that God hath concluded "all men under sin, that he might shew mercy upon all:" and therefore falls into admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Now what follows? having revealed this unsearchable grace, see how he begins in chap. xii. 1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your minds:" that is, I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you refrain from sin; what doth he mean? Even the mercies of God, concerning the freeness of grace, manifested before in chap. xi. Now, if he had been of some men's minds that the preaching of the free grace of God were a dangerous doctrine to set men loose to sin, he would never have used the mercies of God, as an argument to prevail with men to refrain from it; he would not have published that, which should have been of such dangerous consequence, but would rather have been silent, so far from revealing of it as an argument to the contrary; were the revelation of it the way to bring men to licentiousness, it had been his wisdom, and others, to have concealed it, which certainly he would have done, had it been so; but he was not of that judgment; and therefore, in 1 Corinth. vi. 20, he draws hi-

argument after the same manner; "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, and spirits, for they are God's." Observe here, that the injunction which the apostle gives the Corinthians, is, that they should glorify God in their bodies and spirits; and what is the argument by which he would persuade them to it? "You are bought with a price:" but, will some say, it seems I am bought, and the price is laid down for me, I am sure and safe enough, the gates of hell cannot prevail against me; I may live as I list, for no danger will follow me, I may take liberty to sin: now, if the apostle had known that this consequence would justly have followed upon preaching this grace, he dealt very disingenuously with the people of God, and absurdly, by enforcing a conclusion from a ground contrary to it, revealing such as this is: therefore surely he would never have used this expression of being "bought with a price," if he had known that this would follow; but contrarywise, he knew that there is no way in the world will so much prevail with God's people to leave their sins, as by telling them before-hand that they are forgiven, and that they are bought with a price.

In Titus ii. 1—10, you shall find how the apostle urgeth Titus, that he press a holy conversation, answerable to old men and women, as also to young men and women, as also suitable to servants; and especially he writes concerning them, that they should not purloin from their masters, but shew all faithfulness; but what is the argument now, by which he urgeth all these things upon them? In ver. 12, the argument is the same we have now in hand: "For the grace of God, (saith he), that brings salvation, hath appeared, teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." As much as to say, The Lord hath revealed his salvation to you, and you see it before you, it is brought unto you; and not your well-doing, but the grace of God, is that which brings salvation, brings it to you. Then may I do what I list, will some say: no, saith he, this grace of God that brings salvation, brings this too, "It teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world." I say it is blasphemy against the truth of the Holy Ghost in these several passages of scripture, to maintain, that this is a necessary

inference from the revelation of the free grace of God to men before-hand, that thereby men will break out into sin, and give up themselves to it, and that this is the way to give up the reins into the neck of licentiousness.

I will give you but one passage more ; I confess, I have gone further in the clearing of this business by scripture, than I intended ; because I know it sticks so in the hearts of cavillers, that are ready to spit fire into the faces of those that are asserters and maintainers of the free grace of God, and the publishers of it to the people of God. In 1 John iii. 9, “ He that is born of God sinneth not, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” He that is born of God, What is that ? It is no more but this, he that is received into grace by Christ, is one with him, in respect of spiritual union between them ; to be born of God, and be a new creature, is all one ; to be new creatures, is to be such as we were not before. More fully, a new creature is one that is translated from himself into Christ, and stands * before God as Christ himself, and not as he is in, or of himself ; now, such a person, saith the apostle, *sins not* : there may be some difficulty in the expression, but you must know, the intention of the apostle, is to take off the objection against the doctrine of the free grace of God being licentious, and the reproach that is unjustly cast upon it ; and his meaning is, he cannot take such liberty to sin, or make such licentious uses of the grace of God, as to walk in sinful courses, though his sins shall not hurt him ; and the reason is, “ because his seed abides in him,” that is, there is an over-ruling power planted in him, to over-match the propensity of the flesh that remains still in him ; that it should not have that power that naturally it would have, by virtue of such a principle implanted ; not that the apostle speaks absolutely of sin, that a child of God shall sin no more ; for that were to make himself a liar, and that by his own words ; for he saith in another place ; “ He that saith, he hath no sin, deceives himself, and is a liar ;” and king Solomon also, who saith, that “ there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not,” Eccles. vii. 20. Therefore by sin in this place, he must needs mean a licentious liberty taken to sin.

Beloved, I know there are many objections raised against this

* Eph. i. 6 ; Col. ii. 10.

truth; I shall briefly run through some of them, and if it be possible, clear it unto you, and vindicate the gospel from those abominable untruths cast upon it; and that I will do the rather, because thousands in the world turn away from the grace of God, and dare not venture themselves upon it; because they fear, if they should, they should presently take liberty to sin, and so fall away: oh! how many have refused their own mercies, and have not received the gospel to this day upon such conceits, that the receiving of it should make them break out unto ungodliness. I know, there are many here present, cannot but witness, they are afraid to close with free grace, though never so fully proved and manifested in scripture, upon this consideration, that it will make them live loosely.

Some will object and say, We know many that do take liberty to themselves, when once they have been acquainted with such free grace that hath been preached.

For answer to this, I say, That if believers, from this grace published, take liberty, they take but what God giveth them; the end of Christ's coming, and preaching the free grace of God, is to proclaim liberty to the captives which are his own people. He came of purpose, "To deliver those, who through fear of death, are subject to bondage all their lives long," Heb. ii. 15. And therefore, saith Christ, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed;" that is, if the Son give you liberty, then you shall have liberty indeed; so that, if believers do take this liberty, upon this ground, they take but that which is their own, purchased unto them by the blood of Christ, and given unto them freely by God their Father. "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 1, 2.

But some will say, It is a true Christian liberty that Christ allows, and this, indeed, is a liberty he gives men from the captivity and bondage of sin, which they were under before; but many that profess this doctrine, are known to be more slack in the performance of duties, and to grow more and more cold in their zeal, and careless in the practice of religion, and are more regardless of sin; and, in a word, take more liberty to sin, since such grace hath been revealed.

For answer to this, beloved, first, you are not to expect per-

fection of works from believers in this life, and that they should be free from all manner of sin : I know none of those that have the most indignation against this doctrine of the free grace of God to men, but will yield, that they themselves are not without failings ; they ought not, therefore, to aggravate the weakness of their brethren, much less ought the truth of God to be charged with the failings of men : but suppose some do make evil uses of the free grace of God sometimes, and are thereby encouraged to be more bold with sin ; as they are not to be upheld in it, nor allowed, so ought not their fault to be laid upon that, which effectually teacheth the contrary ; for, though believers, in infirmity, may happen at some times or other, to be overcome with strength of passion and corruption, to fall into sin, upon consideration that the free grace of God will save them ; yet shall we therefore conceal this grace, because men take that liberty which it doth not give ? I say, beloved, if this should be a standing rule, God should never have revealed the gospel to the sons of men. I know no believer so perfect in a course of sanctification and obedience, and abstinence from sin, but his corruptions may occasion him to take advantage, even from the gospel itself, to sin ; but certainly, I dare be bold to affirm, there is not any true believer that maintains this principle, that he may sin without control, because the free grace of God hath abounded ; I dare say further, that it is a bold slander, and that no man is able to make it good from true evidence, that there is any that takes constant and frequent liberty to break out into sin, because he knows what shall become of him, and that his sins are done away by the blood of Christ, so that they shall do him no hurt ; for, the belief of this, effectually teaches and produces a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness ; so that certainly, this is more than can be proved against any true believer, that he should approve himself in any sin upon this ground : if indeed believers were in their own keeping, then, what sin might they not fall into ? But they do not stand upon their own principles ; for, saith the apostle, “ You are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5. And again, saith the apostle Paul, “ The life that I now live, is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved me, and gave himself for me ; and I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me,” Gal. ii. 20. **It is not a believer now that lives, but it is Christ that lives in**

nim, and he is the predominant principle whereby his actions are swayed: and as he is carried along according to the principles of Christ, he cannot fall into sin. It is true indeed, Christ, for reasons best known to him, may let loose * the reins wherewith he holds a believer for a while, and then he will fall into sin; but this comes to pass, because the grace of God is hid, and not because it is manifested unto him, and believed by him; and at length the power of Christ shall pull † them in again, even by those cords of love, whereby they were first drawn unto him. And the believer hath the engagement of Christ himself, that he will never fail him, nor forsake him; and he hath promised that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness, and his grace shall be sufficient for him; and that because they are not “under the law, but under grace, therefore sin shall not have dominion over them,” Rom. vi. 14. So that except Christ will give up one of his own members, to make it his constant practice to abuse and turn the grace of God to sin, he shall not do it; but he hath undertaken, that sin shall not have dominion over that person, that is a member of his.

But some will say, there are many that admire and adore the doctrine of the free grace of God, that yet are notoriously known to live in all manner of licentiousness, and that upon this ground, because their sins are laid upon Christ; and they say, we may live in sin and do what we list; and what is their argument? Oh, say they, our sins are laid upon Christ, and he died for them.

For answer to this, I profess, I never heard from any person of credit, that there are any such monsters as these, that dare make it their practice to be drunk, to break the sabbath, to curse and swear, and live in uncleanness, and all manner of vileness, because all their sins are laid upon Christ; that say, they are believers, and they shall do well enough. There are many that are taxed for such; but, for mine own part, I cannot say any thing to the truth of this charge, by mine own experience, of any man in the world; but, it may be there are such monsters as these are, in the world; and the apostle Paul said, there were such in his time, that because the grace of God abounded, would make sin abound, and turn it into wantonness;

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

† Luke xxii. 61.

and, therefore, it is probable there are such now. And if there be any such, let me deal plainly with them ; for my part, I must account them the greatest monsters upon the face of the earth, the greatest enemies to the church that ever were ; and I say, of such dishonourers of the church, and disturbers of the consciences of God's people, that they are carnal, sensual, and devilish. They are the greatest enemies to the free grace of God, the greatest subverters of the power and purity of the gospel, and the greatest hinderers of the course of it, that are under heaven ; and, I dare be bold to say, open drunkards, harlots, and murderers, that profess not the gospel of Jesus Christ, come infinitely short of these in abomination ; none in the world so wound the sides of Christ, as he that professes the gospel, and yet lives wickedly. And, if there be any such here, let me tell them, their faith is no better than that of devils, for they believe and tremble ; and that Christ will have heavier reckoning with such, when they come to judgment, than any under heaven besides. How many thousands have forsaken their own mercy, and despised the free grace of God, accounting it a licentious doctrine, and all because of the occasion such persons as these give by their vile conversation ? Well, beloved, admit that the free grace of God hath been thus abused by such wretches ; look over the whole scripture, hath not both law and gospel been abused, as well as this particular grace ? Is not Christ appointed *for the rising and falling of many in Israel* ? a stumbling-stone for the falling, and a corner-stone for the rising of many ? Is not he set up as a rock for some to build upon, but to dash others in pieces ? for a stone of offence to grind many to powder, as well as to be a foundation-stone to others ? Assure yourselves, the gospel of Christ, as it makes believers far more holy than they can be that receive it not, so there are some that grow far more filthy, and take occasion from it, to filthiness ; but, in the mean time, shall the children want their bread, because dogs catch at it ? Will not you give your children a bit of food all the day, and all the week, because, when you give it them, the dogs snatch at it, and, it may be, pull some of it out of their hands ? Shall the children want, and starve for want of bread, because dogs abuse it ? neither must we make that bitter and sour, which God hath made sweet : because wicked men abuse the gospel and free grace of God, shall the people of God be

deprived of that which he hath appointed and provided for them ? Let me ask this question of you : did not the Lord himself, from everlasting, as clearly see and know, even long before he did reveal it, how his free grace should be abused, when it should be preached, as we ourselves see it abused ? If it be such a dangerous and pernicious thing to preach it, why did he give such a large commission, and such a strait charge to his apostles and ministers to preach it to every creature ? If the publication of it be so dangerous, who must be blamed for it ? Must not God himself that hath commanded us to preach it to every creature ? Beloved, if the ministers of the gospel preach the mind of Christ unto his people, shall they be traduced and oppressed for it ? Do ye not, through us, wound the sides of Christ, and God himself ? Is not this to charge him that is wisdom itself with folly ? For if ministers declare this doctrine, it is no more than that, which God hath before revealed unto them, and given them commission for ; but if they, out of a carnal and needless fear of liberty, instead of preaching the mind of God, shall preach themselves ; (let it be never so specious and well-liked of men) they shall be judged of God as coming in their own names, and not sent by him.

But you will say, it may be done, with caution and limitation.

I answer, Let us not be more wary and cautious than God would have us be, to put mixtures of men's doings to the obtaining of his grace, while he himself pours it out to men simply for his own sake, without consideration of any thing in them. *The children being yet unborn*, speaking of Jacob and Esau, when yet they had done neither good nor evil ; it was said unto Rebecca, *The elder shall serve the younger*, as it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated:" men will be mincing this truth, and they will tell you, if you keep close unto God, and refrain from sin, especially from gross sin, God will love you, and then you may apply these promises to yourselves : but God speaks plainly and expressly here, "Before they had done either good or evil, Jacob have I loved." The grace of God is passed over to men as they are ungodly, *while they are yet enemies and sinners* ; men being yet unborn, when there is nothing in them considered, but pollution in blood and menstruousness, God casts his loving-kindness, and establishes it : before Jacob had done any thing, or had any good intention to him, God loved

him, and appointed this grace for him; this is the grace of God revealed, and he hath revealed it, thus freely to men: now, is this the Lord himself that speaks it? Hath he given us commission to preach this gospel and grace of his, and shall we be blamed and opposed for preaching those things that he hath commanded us to speak, and hath put into our mouths, saying we preach a doctrine of looseness and licentiousness; and give men leave to do what they list. And yet all this is but grounded upon carnal fear and needless jealousy of a licentious liberty.

But some will say, the preaching of the terrors of the law, the wrath of God, damnation, and hell-fire unto men, is a safer way to take men off from sin, than to preach grace and forgiveness of sin before-hand. It is better to lay the foundation first in preaching wrath and damnation.

For answer to this, I say, if we preach wrath and damnation, we must either make them believe they lie under it, and that it shall come upon them; or we must make them believe, that though there be wrath, yet it shall not fall upon them: now, if we tell them of wrath and damnation, and the terrors of the law, and say they are secure from them, they belong not to them, to what purpose do we tell them of them? We had as good say nothing: if we should terrify them, and make them believe, being believers, for of those I speak, if they commit such sins, they shall be damned, and so come under the wrath of God; and except they perform such and such duties, walk thus and thus holy, they shall come under the wrath of God, or at least he will be angry with them; what do we in this, but abuse the scriptures? we undo all that Christ hath done; we injure and wrong the believers themselves; we tell God he lies to his face: for, if we tell them, that except they do these good works, they shall come under the wrath of God; what is this, but to tell that God lies, and to bring the faithful under a covenant of works? Look into Isaiah liv. 9, and you shall see how it is a belying of God, to say, that believers may come under wrath and damnation, except they do thus and thus; the Holy Ghost speaks there of the time when the seed of Jacob shall inherit the Gentiles, that is, the time of the gospel: in the beginning, the Lord tells us of an everlasting kindness, that should never depart, nor be made void, and he confirms it thus: "This is as the waters of Noah

unto me, saith the Lord, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall never go over the earth again, so have I sworn, that I will not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee: the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee: neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord." Observe it well; hath God made such an oath concerning these very times, so firm and stable, that the earth shall be drowned again with water, before it shall be broken; "That he will not be wroth with his people, nor rebuke them any more?" And, shall we tell believers, if they sin, they shall come under God's wrath; except they do such and such good works, God will be angry with them, after he hath so sworn, that he will not be wroth with his people any more? Is not this to make God a liar? Again, we do not only, so much as lies in us, make him a liar, but we offer an unsufferable affront unto Jesus Christ, and strike at the very heart of the whole office of his mediatorship. If we say, that God is wroth with believers, for whom Christ died, for what end did he suffer death? I say, if this principle be a truth, that God will be wroth with his people, then Christ died in vain; for he could have been but wroth with them, if he had never died: and to bring the people of God under wrath and vengeance again for their sins, is to take away all the virtue of the death of Christ, and to make it of none effect; and how will this stand with Isaiah liii. 11, "That he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied?" Was God satisfied with the sufferings of Christ, having the sins of his people laid upon him, and yet is he wroth and angry with believers for those very sins again, which before he acknowledged satisfaction for? If a man be indebted unto another, and the creditor be willing to take a surety for the debt, and this surety comes in and pays this debt for the man he was bound for, and he thereupon gives a general discharge under hand and seal, shall he yet, by and by, after take the debtor by the throat, and clap him up in goal; when the surety hath answered for the debt before, and after he hath delivered, under hand and seal, that he was satisfied, and that his book was crossed? Who but must say, it is injustice in the highest degree? What justice, what equity is in this? Beloved, Christ became our surety; God accepted of him for our debt; he clapt him up in goal, as I may say, for the debt; he took

every farthing that he could demand of us ; he is now reconciled unto us ; he will not now impute our sins to us ; he hath acknowledged satisfaction, it is upon record ! and now shall he come upon them again with fresh wrath, for whom Christ hath done all this ? Shall he charge the debt upon them again ? He hath forgotten the death of Christ, it seems, if this be true. Therefore know thus much, that it is against his death ; a making of it of none effect, and his coming to be in vain, to say, that the wrath of God will break out upon believers, if they commit such and such sins : and for this I have said, if any man can produce one scripture against it, or shew in all the book of God, that it is in any otherwise than I have delivered, I shall willingly recant my opinion. But I see the scripture runs wholly in this strain, and is so full in nothing as in this, that God hath generally discharged the sins of believers. Oh ! then take heed of falling into the error of the Papists, that say, that God hath taken away the sin, but not the wrath of God due to it ; that he hath forgiven our sins, but not their punishment : but I beseech you, consider, that as our sins were then upon Christ, he was so bruised for them, that by his stripes we are healed, and the chastisement of our peace was so upon him, that there is nothing else but peace belongs to us ; that he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied ; Christ was chastised, as I have often said, with the rod of God's wrath, that it was quite worn out, and wholly spent itself upon him : this is apparent in the very tenor of the new covenant itself ; it runs altogether upon the free gift and grace ; God takes upon himself to do all that shall be in believers, and asking and requiring nothing at all of us ; it is true, he saith there shall be the new heart, and a new spirit, and a new law written in the inward parts ; but he requires it not of the believer, but he himself hath undertaken to do all, and bestow it upon him. “ A new heart will I give thee, and a new spirit will I put into thee ; and I will take away thy stony heart, and I will give thee a heart of flesh.” He doth not say, you must get you new hearts, and new spirits, and your stony hearts taken away ; and you must get you hearts of flesh ; but I will take the work in hand, and I will see all done myself ; all runs freely upon God's undertaking for his people. Seeing therefore God doth all things freely of his own accord in us ; then, beloved, see how the grace of God is

bused by those that would make men believe that it depends upon men's doings; and tell men, if they do not, the wrath of God will follow thereupon. This likewise batters down to the ground that way of urging men to holiness, which some men hold forth: that if men do not such good works, and leave such sins, then they must come under the wrath of God; and the wrath of God is but hidden all this while they do these and these good works; but, if they fail in any of them, then the wrath of God will break out upon them; whereas they ought rather, after the example of the apostle, to excite them to these good works, because they are already freed from wrath.

Certainly, this, that I have delivered, proves it sufficiently, that the appearing of the grace of God teaches men to do the will of God effectually; the love of God constrains the faithful, and not the fear of wrath.

But, to conclude, do not mistake me; in the mean while, I have no thoughts, as if wrath and vengeance were not to be preached, and made known even to believers; they are to be made known to them, and that as the deserts of sin, and as the means to keep from sin.

But now, some may say, this seems to be against, and to overthrow all that you have delivered.

Observe me well, do not mistake me; you must know, that wrath and vengeance must be revealed to believers, and to restrain them from sin, but not in that way men ordinarily think; I mean thus, wrath and vengeance must be revealed, as if believers were to fear them, or as if they should come under them; but as they are secured and freed from them, that so they should fear to commit sin; not for fear of coming under wrath, but out of love, because God hath been so gracious to them, as to deliver them from the weight of so heavy wrath and displeasure, that otherwise must of necessity have fallen upon them; and so their walking with God in a holy conversation, is a fruit of the mercy already shewn, and doth not go before, as a thing by which it should be obtained and procured? they serve God, because they are delivered from wrath, and not because they might receive deliverance from it. It proceeds from joy, in consideration of wrath already past, and not from fear of it to come; so that the wrath of God is preached unto them, not that they are to come under it, or are in that way to fear it, but that

they may see what they are delivered from; what they did, and should, and others must lie under; that they may see God's love unto them therein, that this may draw them to obedience, and restrain them from sin. And, now they say, because I have been delivered from so great a wrath, therefore will I sing and rejoice, *and walk before the Lord in the land of the living*, and triumph in him my deliverer; leading a life answerable to the love of God, bestowing such a deliverance upon me; and so, by this preaching of the wrath of God, as being free from it, the more one seeth that he is freed from, the more he seeth what Christ hath done in bearing that wrath from him; and consequently, the more he is stirred up to walk before God in more cheerful and comfortable obedience, and the more thankful he will be; and the more he seeth what God hath done for him, the more obedience he seeth he oweth unto him.

And now, if any persons here present, have an evil opinion of the grace of God, as a thing of dangerous consequence, as a licentious doctrine; let them learn from that which hath been said, to mend their minds, and correct their judgments, knowing that the Holy Ghost is of another mind; that the revealing of the grace of God is the best way in the world to take men off from sin; so far is it from letting loose the reins to persons to break out into all manner of sinfulness

SERMON XXXV.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE.

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU, THAT YOU SIN NOT : AND IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS ; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OUR SINS ONLY, BUT FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

I HAVE elsewhere made an entrance, in respect of some generals these words afford ; time being precious, we shall be as thrifty of it as possible may be ; only a few words, so far as may serve to bring us where we were, and then we shall bring you on (by God's assistance) through the particulars this text holds forth unto you.

The main scope of the apostle in it, is to endeavour to take the people of God off from running into sin : but, first, he useth an argument to prevail with them, which seems absurd unto the world, and, doubtless, goes for little less than foolishness among men, if not worse ; “ I write unto you, that you sin not.” Well, but how will he prevail with them ? “ If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins :” as much as to say, this is the best way to prevail with you, that you sin not, to know before-hand, that if you sin, you have an advocate with the Father that will take away your faults, and save you harmless. Indeed, it is accounted absurd ; but this is the common strain of the gospel, to make this the best argument that can be imagined, to prevail over people from committing sin, to let them know how gracious God is unto them, even to the forgiving of their sins they shall commit ; and that which we noted as the main body of the discourse was this : for such persons, who have fellowship with the Father and the Son, to know beforehand that they have “ an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ

the righteous, who is the propitiation for their sins," is so far from being the opening of the flood-gates to sin, that it is a shutting them down, to stop the course of sin. The Holy Ghost is very plentiful, in this very way of arguing, to prevail with God's people not to sin; shewing clearly thereby, that the proclaiming of the free grace of God to them, in the pardon of their sins, and letting them know it before they sin, doth not destroy obedience to the law of God, but establishes it better than any other arguments can do. You may see it clearly in Rom. iii. 23—26, where the apostle preacheth grace, in the absolute freeness of it, to persons that are utterly undone, and know not what to do; and, in ver. 31, he brings in an objection; "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." The apostle making his conclusion. "We are justified by faith without the deeds of the law," says, this establishes the law, and doth not make it void; to know, that from all the sins we commit, we are freely justified by his grace, establishes obedience to it: so, in chap. vi. 1, 2, having gone on to declare the exceeding riches of the grace of God in chap. iv. and v. makes the same objection in substance that he did before: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid; how shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?" Wherein he shews plainly, that though some may collect that this is a way to make men continue in sin, to preach the exceeding riches of the grace of God; yet, he saith, there can be no such conclusion drawn from it, by just inference: "How shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?" Wherein he puts it to the objectors themselves, whether they can make it out, how it is possible it should be; therefore, he makes use of it, as the strength of his argument to prevail with people, in Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." You see he makes use of mercy, and what mercy is it? In chap. xi. 33, 34, he seems to intimate what that mercy is: "O! the depth of the exceeding riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" wherein? in that "he hath concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all;" I beseech you by these, and all other mercies of free grace, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God, not conforming yourselves to this world;" as if he had said, mercy is that which will prevail with you most of all, to

present your bodies a living sacrifice, and not conform yourselves to the world; but I must go on to that we have yet to consider: I have spent some time in objections and answers, but we cannot now dwell upon them. We are to consider now the specialties of the argument the apostle useth here to prevail with people that they sin not.

Beloved, this very text is the opening of the fountain for sin, and for uncleanness: it is a spring of water to revive a fainting and swooning spirit; it is the prop of a tottering soul, to keep it from sinking and perishing; in it the Lord Christ is revealed unto us, an all-sufficient succour to all his own, notwithstanding all their sins that ever they commit. Herein are we consider, 1. The matter of this argument. 2. The force and strength of it, in reference to the thing the apostle would argue from hence.

1. The matter of the argument itself that is contained in these words: "If any man sin," &c. The force of it lies in the reference of it to the thing the apostle calls for; wherein we may consider, what prevalency this position hath to keep from sin; namely, for persons to know, that when they sin, they have an advocate with the Father.

We will begin with the matter of the argument first, and in this proposition there are two things observable;

1. A supposition. 2. A provision of indemnity against the mischief supposed. The supposition is in these words; "If any man sin:" the provision of indemnity is; "We have an advocate with the Father," &c.: in the supposition you may note, 1. The thing supposed, Sin. 2. The time which illustrates it; he speaks of present and future sins; he doth not say, if any sinned heretofore, in the preter sense, but he speaks of the time present, "If any man sin;" there are some things that are spoken of the present time, that are in force, but only that very instant in which they are spoken; and that very instant being past, the thing itself is also past; but, for this expression, "If any man sin," it is not transient, but permanent: the apostle speaks not only of his time, and of the people of it, "If any man sin" now; the words are not to be understood of that very instant only, and exclusively, as having reference only to those that did sin in his time, then these words should have been transient; but the meaning is, that the present of which he spake should be a standing present time; and the words should

be of force for present, even as long as the word of God should remain upon record; they are to be understood of this present time, and all present times that shall be in the next age that shall succeed; if any man sin now, or in the next age; there is to be understood a perpetuity of present time, in this expression. It is of great concern, beloved, that you receive this truth, unless you exclude yourselves from the benefit of the advocateship of Christ; for, if the words were intended only for that time wherein they were expressed, what should become of us, that live so many ages after it? They must therefore be of a perpetual and permanent being.

3. Note in the supposition, the nature of it, "If any man sin," saith the apostle; this word [*If*] admits of a double construction; either the supposition imports a thing possible, but not likely; or a thing that may be likely to come to pass, or rather that will come to pass. Either it is a supposition, in case a thing is, which, it may be, will not; or a supposition by way of confession and granting of the thing supposed. In this place, John puts not the word *if* by way of supposition, as if it were only likely there should be a sinning; and if there were a sinning, there were an advocate; but he puts the word here by way of concession, as if he had said, there must and will be sinning; we, God's own people, shall fall into sin, it cannot be denied; but for refuge, when such sins are committed, know that there is an advocate with the Father, "Jesus Christ the righteous." Thus you have the first part of the text branched out unto you; namely, the apostle's supposition.

2. Consider the provision that the Lord, by the apostle, holds forth unto persons that are believers, the members of Christ, for their indemnity against sins they do, or shall commit; namely, "We have an advocate with the Father." In which observe, 1. The office assigned for the making good such provision; "We have an advocate with the Father." 2. The person to whom this office of advocateship is given, and therein the ability and qualification of him to manage it effectually, "Jesus Christ the righteous." 3. The issue, and the event of the execution of this office, "He is the propitiation for our sins." 1. In the office that the Lord sets on foot for the provision of indemnity against sin, being committed, you may observe, (1.) The office itself, and that is an advocateship. (2.) The propriety of this

office, or the relation of it to the persons that are the members of Christ. The apostle doth not say, simply and abstractively, there is an advocate, but he speaks relatively, we have an advocate, that is, *our advocate*, &c. (3.) This advocate is set forth, not only in his relation to men, as theirs, but also unto God; he doth not say simply, we have an advocate; but declares the excellency of this office, by this circumstance, with the Father; we have an advocate, he is ours; and not only so, but an advocate of ours with the Father; which notes unto us, that the plea of Christ for indemnity from sin, is not in any inferior court; where, if there be a sentence of acquittance procured, there may be a charge from an higher; but the advocateship of Christ is managed for our good, in the highest court of all, with the highest judge; that when he gets a sentence, it is definitive*, and there is no other court that can take upon it the determination of the case; or call in question the trial of that which hath been determined there. (4.) The provision in respect of the office assigned, is excellently illustrated by the circumstance of time, when on foot, or when the officer manages it. The text doth not say, we had or shall have an advocate, but he speaks in the present tense, *We have an advocate*, that now is to act: it is but cold comfort for a man to say, being now a beggar, he had abundance of wealth; neither doth it give him fulness of comfort, to say, that he shall have abundance of wealth hereafter; but herein lies his comfort, that he can say in truth, I am rich, I have abundance of all things. It is but cold comfort for a man to say, I had a friend in court once, but he is dead now; if he had been alive now, it had been better with me than it is, I should have sped well; I had then carried the cause on my side; he would have done so and so for me. But here lies a man's comfort, that he hath a friend at court that will do him a good office at his need; the apostle saith here, *We have an advocate*. As, therefore, I said of the present being of sin committed, so I say of the present being of our advocate; it must not be understood to be a transient, but a permanent sentence; it was in force in the apostle's time, it is as full in force in our time; and we may as well and truly say, *We have an advocate*; and, in after ages, the church of God shall say it

* Dan. vi. 8.

to the end of the world in their times, as truly as we now, and the apostle in his time said it.

2. Consider here the person managing this office of advocateship, who is described unto us by three notable titles that are proper and full for the comfort and encouragement of those, whose advocate he is; he is *Jesus Christ the righteous*; (1.) he is *Jesus*, and that is a word that imports a Saviour, as the angel expounded it; "And they shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," Mat. i. 21. An admirable encouragement to lift up the heads of dejected and drooping spirits, when the advocate comes to plead; this advocate is their Saviour; that is, his plea is of such force and prevalency, that he saves his client.

But some may say, many times in suits of law, men might have skilful lawyers, which are able to save them, who are not admitted to plead for them, because they are not called to the bar.

Yea, but (2.) this Jesus is Christ too; this advocate doth not rush into this office of his own head, without warrant, but is called to it; for, as you shall hear afterwards, the word *Christ* imports anointing to the office. Many a good lawyer indeed, may not be admitted to come to the bar of Common Pleas, although he can plead the cause of his client the best of all; he must be authorised and called unto the bar, or else he may not speak; but the advocate provided for the indemnity against sin, is Christ, he is called to it.

(3.) It is *Jesus Christ the righteous*; and that imports the strength of the plea he hath, by which he becomes a propitiation for sin; it is his righteousness that prevails in heaven, to get the sentence to go on the side of the client.

Lastly, you may observe here, the issue what will become of this advocateship, what effect it will have at the last; many, who have causes in suit, are restless to know how their cause will go; when they come to trial they fain would know on which side the verdict will be given; and it is a great refreshing to persons, to know before-hand, that the cause will go on their side. Now, the apostle here intimates unto us, what will become of the cause before it is tried; he is such an advocate with the Father, (saith he) that he is become the propitiation for all the sins of God's people; and what that is, we shall shew hereafter: beloved, this

is a large field of excellent variety of sweetness and fatness; we must take the particulars into consideration, that we may discuss them the more orderly; and I hope it will be no difficulty to gather some of the flowers in this garden; and the Spirit of the Lord assisting, there may be such sucking, that persons may be satisfied at the breasts of consolation. That we may the better lay our mouths to this breast, and draw more easily the milk of it, let us briefly consider these particulars.

1. The office here spoken of, what it is to be an advocate, and how Christ manages it, being in heaven.

2. Whose cause it is, that Christ undertakes to be an advocate for.

3. How he is qualified for the comfortable management of this office.

4. What it is to have Christ to be the propitiation for the sins of his people; this is the sum of the whole drift of the apostle, in these words.

1. What the office of advocateship is, and what it is for Christ to be an advocate, and how he now manages it in heaven for his elect.

This office, as it is appropriated unto Christ, is not once more mentioned in all the scriptures besides. Of an intercessor, and redeemer, and the atonement, we read frequently in scripture, that Christ is all these; but that Christ is an advocate, is not mentioned in all the scripture but in this place; and therefore, it will be the more difficult to find out the intention of the Holy Ghost, what he means by it. The word advocate, in the original is, *παράκλητος*, and the same word is used in John xv. 26, and attributed unto the Holy Ghost, and is there translated the *Comforter*; *παράκλητος*, saith the text, "The comforter will come." Now, the same word that we have here *Advocate*, is also *παράκλητος*; and indeed the proper signification of the word is, *A comfortable Advocate*. But what is this advocateship, you will say? It is a borrowed expression, and an allusion, opening the prevalency of Christ with the Father, for his own people; it is taken from an office among men. Advocates in the common law, you call them counsellors, but in the civil law, they have this very title of advocate. The office is this: namely, being well experienced in the nature of the law, and the rules and principles of justice; whenever a cause comes to

be tried, they are to make clear those principles, and so plead justice on behalf of the client. I say, the office of an advocate is, to plead the cause of a person as it stands in equity and justice, and to demand and require a sentence of acquittance from justice and equity itself: herein an advocate differs from a suppliant; a suppliant makes only requests, and depends altogether upon favour alone; so as if he should stand to the rigour of justice, he must be gone, and his cause must miscarry: but an advocate stands to the justice of a person, whose cause he pleads, and puts the issue of the trial on justice itself; that as the cause can be cleared to be just, so the judge would pass a sentence upon it: just so, I say, it is with Christ, pleading the cause of his own people with the Father, in respect of indemnity from sin; for his advocateship is this, namely, to lay the law to the Father, to plead justice in the discharge of the sinner that commits sin, that it is but right to discharge him; and it were injustice, if he should not: I say, it is most certainly true, that Christ stands here upon justice, and he will in righteousness have God to discharge his own people from all the sins that they commit; and he pleads, that it is an unrighteous thing, to charge them with them, or to plague or punish them for them.

But some, peradventure, will be ready to say, this cannot be, that Christ, as an advocate, should plead for indemnity upon terms of justice; for in the strictness and rigour of justice, the soul that sins must die; and the gospel seems to say, it is only and solely grace, that any person is discharged from sin; for, in justice, there cannot be a claim made of pardon and discharge from sin; but all the plea must be merely bounty and favour.

This objection seems to have a great deal of strength in it. How may these two things stand together, that Christ, pleading justice, God must forgive; and yet, notwithstanding, justice sentences a person unto death if he sins? For answer to this, you must learn to distinguish, and I desire you warily to observe this distinction, that so you may plainly see a reconciliation of that which seems impossible to be reconciled; namely, consider the pardon, or discharge from sin, in regard of any thing laid down, in consideration of sin committed by the person who partakes of pardon; and this pardon, or discharge from sin, in reference unto Christ who gets it: now, in respect of us that partake of this discharge from sin, and in regard of any thing

that we can bring in recompence for it, it is merely and only grace, that sinners, being the members of Christ, are discharged : when you, or I, commit a sin, that God discharges us, doth not lay our sins to us, or doth not give sentence of damnation upon us for such sins committed, it is an act of mere grace alone ; justice cannot be pleaded in this case.

But then, consider the indemnity from sin, in respect of Christ, who gets this discharge ; then he is to be considered two ways : 1. As he is allowed by the Father to stand in the room of such persons, whose cause he pleads ; or, 2. As he hath actually made full payment, his satisfaction being allowed and admitted before. Now, I answer, considering Christ, in his being allowed by the Father to stand in the room of the person whose cause he pleads ; this discharge from sin by him, is an act of grace ; Christ cannot plead justice, that he should be allowed ; there was not a tie upon the Father, that Christ should be in man's room, and that he should be unrighteous, if he did not ordain him to be so ; it was an act of free grace in God, when his people were under the curse, and became miserable bankrupts, that Christ should make satisfaction for them. When one man owes another money, it is not an unrighteous act in the creditor to refuse a surety ; he may make the debtor pay the debt himself, if he will ; it is matter of grace, mere courtesy so to do ; even so it is matter of grace, that Christ is admitted to come in the room of the elect, and bear their sins ; to be admitted to bear the wrath of God for these sins, that another hath committed, is an act of grace ; and, in regard of these particulars, is the scripture so frequent in expressions of the free grace of God, in communicating this discharge and pardon of sin unto sinners. But, 2. consider, Christ allowed of the Father to stand in the room of sinners, as he hath come forth, and paid down the utmost farthing that God in justice could demand for, or in consideration of these sins committed by his people : I say, when Christ hath deposited into the hands of his Father, the utmost farthing that he could charge upon, or demand of believers ; this being received by the Father, and acknowledgment being made by him, upon the receipt of what Christ hath paid ; this is an act of justice, that the Father should justify and acquit these persons, for whom he hath received of Christ this satisfaction, and accordingly hath acknowledged it, under his own hand, and acquitted them. You know

though it be in a man's power whether he will take a surety, or the principal, for his money; yet when he hath taken a surety, and he hath made payment, it is an act of unrighteousness in the creditor, after the acknowledgment of full satisfaction, to come upon the principal again, and make him pay the money; and it is a plea grounded in law, that if that cause come in trial again, the judge ought to acquit the principal, if it be proved that the debt is paid by the surety. Now, Christ hath paid all that the Father could ask, and he hath acknowledged full satisfaction for all; "He beheld the travail of his soul and was satisfied." Now, being satisfied, it is an act of justice, that the Father should acquit a person in this kind: suppose one should be brought before a judge, in a cause wherein he oweth the judge himself such a sum of money; an advocate comes and pleads the cause before the judge, that it is true, there was so much money lent and borrowed, but, saith the advocate, I myself became the surety for that man, I paid every farthing; here is the acquittance you gave under your own hand: now, I ask this question, the judge being convinced, and a righteous judge too, of the truth of the plea, whether in judgment he ought not to acquit that person, whose cause is pleaded before him? He took satisfaction, he acknowledged it, he could have it but of him, therefore in justice he must discharge him. The same case is between God and us; it is true, indeed, believers commit those things that are in their own nature debts; "Forgive us our debts," as the word is: but when this cause came to be pleaded before God, the judge himself, to whom the debt was owing, Christ the advocate came, and stood up and pleaded, that he himself being become the surety of a better testament, upon it he came, and paid the whole debt; and he, having satisfied his Father, received under his hand, that he had paid every farthing, and that he was satisfied, and that upon that satisfaction his people should be discharged: now, this plea is grounded upon justice itself: observe how fully and clearly the apostle speaks the same things, in John i. 7, "The blood of Christ his Son, cleanseth from all sins;" and here, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins:" and again, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Mark well, that the apostle grounds himself upon Christ's satisfaction,

namely, his blood that cleanses us from all sin; upon this he concludes that it is an act of faithfulness and justice in God to forgive it. I dare say, none are so ignorant in these days of light, as to think there is such a proportion between confession of sin, and forgiveness, that confession can balance forgiveness, and so, consequently, make it an act of justice; no, the apostle grounds the force of justice upon the blood of Christ that is shed; therefore, if you do observe it well, you shall find, that he speaks of confession, by way of prevention of fear; you know the common proverb concerning a malefactor apprehended, "Let him confess, and be hanged?" why so? because, if it be disclosed, the law lays hold upon him, and he shall be sure to die for it; and therefore, in natural policy, his safety lies in concealing it. But, if satisfaction hath been made by a friend of his to the law, and accordingly a pardon sued out for him, there is no danger in his confession at all. Now, the apostle in this place, having before said, that "The blood of Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sins," from hence gathers encouragement unto the people of Christ, that they should not fear, so as to conceal their sins, lest being known, they should do them a mischief: but saith he, lay all open before the Lord, there is no danger to be suspected now; for God is faithful and just to forgive them; therefore the hiding of them should prevent no evil, because no evil should come upon them for them, though they were laid open never so naked. Therefore was this spoken by the apostle, to take away fear, and is the true meaning of the Holy Ghost therein; I say, to take away fear from the damage that would ensue, if we should confess our sins what they are. Paul writing to Timothy, mark what he ascribes to participating of the excellencies of Christ, even of righteousness and justice: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness;" mark, "a crown of righteousness is laid up;" in which is included the discharge from sin, and participating of glory, and this prepared and laid up: but mark the foundation of his confidence, that he shall partake of it; it is a righteous judge that shall give it; he shall give it out of righteousness itself; justice shall prevail with him to do this thing for him: whence it is, that Christ is called so frequently *righteousness*. "The Lord our righteousness," as in Jer. xxiii. 6, a prophecy concerning the righteous branch; and his name

shall be called, "The Lord our righteousness;" that is, the Lord that is righteous, makes us one with God, and communicates his own righteousness unto us, that we may be the delight of the Father. Give me leave to tell you, beloved, that God is so unchangeable in all his attributes, that even Christ himself is not able to obtain any thing of him that may be any ways prejudicial to any attribute whatsoever; he can get nothing of the Father, whereby his justice may suffer, or be violated. Christ must make it clear, that justice shall have its full due, and God shall not need to bate one grain of what it expects, or else Christ himself can have nothing of him; for he came not to destroy the law, much less that which is essential unto God: justice is essential unto him; if Christ violate justice, he should destroy the very being of God himself; without giving justice satisfaction, this would be a derogation to the Father; hence when Christ pleads with him for the elect, that they might have a discharge from sin, he makes it manifest that all he asks of him, is according to justice; nay, he makes it appear, that justice is as much satisfied in discharging of believers from their sins, as it is in the damnation of the reprobates in hell for theirs. Justice hath no more right in their damnation, than it hath in the others acquittance and discharge; in their damnation, to satisfy justice, there is no more but the wrath of God revealed from heaven, and executed upon them: now, for those that are the members of Christ and discharged by him from their sins, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, and poured out upon his Son in their behalf; who sustained, in respect of the proportion of justice, equivalently to all the torments the reprobates in hell do, so that Christ hath as fully satisfied the justice of God for his elect, as it is satisfied in the damned in hell, who suffer in their own persons: surely, there had been no need of his coming into the world, if believers might have been saved, and justice violated without satisfaction; but now justice had been violated, had not a proportionable recompence been made, before the sin had been discharged from the person committing it. Therefore the Psalmist speaks admirably, when he saith, "Mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other:" this place is appropriated unto Christ, shewing, that in managing the work of redemption for the elect, as he exalts mercy, so he doth not diminish justice; but carries the business so, that both of them

nave their due, and so their due, that they agree one with another; nay, embrace and kiss each other; they come to rejoice and triumph in the satisfaction of each other. And, therefore, it is but an ignorant imagination in the hearts of some men, that God will grow more remiss, in respect of the sins of his own people; that he is not so much offended with sin, after Christ died, as before; for he hath all the abhorring, detesting thoughts of sin in the nature of it, since Christ is dead, as he had before; it is altogether as abominable unto him, as before it was; Christ did not come to make sin less filthy to the Lord, or to make a person, where sin is, more lovely, or less hateful to him; but rather declares, and sets forth the wrath of God against sin in the highest degree. Wherever the Lord seeth sin, and not Christ upon the person taking away that sin, he cannot but hate both the sin and the sinner. All the pleasure the Lord takes in the elect, proceeds from a purity Christ puts upon them; and the taking away of that sinfulness from them, which otherwise could not but stir up indignation and wrath in him against them, where he finds it, is the ground upon which Christ pleads justice, that so it might appear there is no violation of it; but the Lord is as well satisfied, as if the person transgressing had laid under the wrath deserved, in his own person. I could wish, I were able to speak to you in so full and clear language, that not one dram of this glorious mystery of this gospel of Christ might be hid, for the comforting and refreshing of your spirits; the thing I drive at, being, that all the people of Christ might know wherein lies their strong consolation, not in themselves, as if they did not sin, or could make amends for their sins; but in him who hath made perfect reconciliation for them, and in whom they are accepted with the Father; (as if they themselves in their own persons had made this reconciliation) who hath presented them so complete in himself unto him, that he is pleased to look upon them as upon his own innocent Son, and to take pleasure in them, with the same pleasure that he takes in his beloved. And, if ever you mean to have your consciences, and your consolations established, and well grounded, concerning the pardon of your sins, you must see that Christ hath only pleaded, and doth plead out your acquittance and discharge, and this your indemnity, even to the satisfying of justice itself. For if justice be not yet satisfied; if the Lord hath yet a plea against your souls, and

Christ hath not fully answered it, but left this plea with God, who shall stand up before him, Christ being silent to plead for you? God's justice comes in, and pleads terribly against you, and will exact satisfaction of you; therefore you must receive this principle, if you will be established in consolation; that as there is mercy in respect of us, who bring nothing in consideration of our sins, so there is justice in forgiving sin, in respect of Christ our advocate, that manages his office, and makes it known for this very end, that we might have the stronger consolation.

SERMON XXXVI.

CHRIST'S ADVOCATESHIP FOR ALL THE ELECT.

1 JOHN II. 1, 2.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU, THAT YOU SIN NOT: AND IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS

WE have formerly (as some of you may remember) entered upon these words; wherein the apostle makes the proposal of the grace of God in Christ, the encouragement unto people to forbear sin. The first thing we noted from hence, was this; that the knowledge of an advocate that becomes a propitiation for sin, even for such as commit sin, is so far from opening a gap unto a licentious life, that indeed it is the best means to keep us from it. The last day we fell upon the matter of the argument, which the apostle useth to dissuade little children from sin: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Hercin we proposed to be considered,

1. What this advocateship of Christ is, and how he manages it.

2. Whose cause it is that Christ here pleads.

3. How he is qualified for this office.

4. What the issue of this advocateship of Christ is, proposed in the last words of the text; "He is the propitiation for our sins."

1. What this office of advocateship is, the sum is briefly this: the office of an advocate is to plead the cause of a man, as it is in justice and right; so that the advocateship of Christ consists in pleading the discharge of his people, even from the principle of right and justice.

Whereas it is objected, and indeed seems a thing unreconcilable, namely, that this discharge from sin, goes all along under the notion of free grace and pardon; how can this be, if it be merely an act of justice, for God to forgive sins?

This may easily be reconciled with a distinction; discharge from sin, in respect of us, or what we can bring by way of recompence for the sin committed, is merely free grace; we can bring nothing at all; also in respect of Christ, as he is allowed to stand in our room, it is grace too; but, Christ being allowed and admitted, and the Lord having taken the full payment he could ask at his hands, and acknowledging satisfaction upon such payment; this act of Christ makes it an act of justice, that God should forgive sins; and therefore the apostle in 1 John i. 7, tells us, "That the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all our sins;" and concludes, that "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" but, I cannot insist upon what I formerly delivered: now, peradventure some (though I confess a little over-curious) desire to understand how Christ, being now in heaven, executes this office of advocateship, or in what sense he is said to plead the cause of his people: I call it a curious query, because the scriptures are very sparing in declaring the manner of Christ's managing this office: that he is an advocate, is clear enough; how he deals with God in the execution of it, is more obscure: frequent mention is made, indeed, of Christ's intercession in heaven; "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;" yet though this be frequently mentioned, and the comfort of God's people much laid upon this, yet the scriptures are very sparing what kind of intercession he makes; whether he

prays to his Father in Heaven, as he did upon earth, or no; and the like I say, of this business of advocateship. Some few passages of scripture there are that will give some hint, at least have some glimmerings of the very manner of Christ's advocateship, and the execution of it. Heb. xi. 4, will give us some light. "By faith," saith the apostle, "Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, whereby he received, or obtained witness of God, that he was righteous, by which, he being dead, yet speaketh;" that is, by which sacrifice: the sacrifices, you know, were Christ in the antitype; for all the life of them, from which men obtain testimony of God, that they are righteous, is Christ himself; and it is Christ in sacrifice that speaks, even when the sacrifice itself is offered: I conceive, therefore, beloved, as sacrifices speak, in respect of a prevailing power they have with God, when he sits in judgment; so likewise the advocateship of Christ, which is nothing else but the speaking of Christ, is managed after such a manner; Christs speaks as sacrifice speaks; for, indeed, he, as advocate, pleads as a sacrifice for man: in chap. xii. 22—24, you have another expression a little more clear. "We are come," saith the apostle, "to mount Sion, the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel." Here, you see, whereas he in the former chapter put a voice, or a plea, in the mouth of sacrifices, in this, he speaks more plainly, and puts a voice, or plea, to that which is the life of sacrifices; namely, the blood of sprinkling, the blood of Jesus Christ; and this is that which speaks better things than the blood of Abel. You know that there was a strong plea in his blood, which cried from earth to heaven, till it brought vengeance upon the head of Cain; the blood of Christ hath a stronger plea, and cry, and is for better purposes; so that under favour (for in this I shall not contend much), so far as I can see, the value and desert of the bloodshed of Christ, is the plea that he makes as advocate in heaven; that when a believer commits sin, the efficacy of the bloodshed is fresh in the presence of the Lord, in the behalf of that poor wretch that hath thus sinned; I say, the blood is present, and the whole efficacy and virtue of it is fresh in the thoughts of the Lord; and, as it is thus effectual and powerful, brings the discharge and acknowledgment of it to

his thoughts too (if I may so speak), whereby he is pacified towards them, and pleased with them. This is always before him, and present with him; yea, when the sins that a believer commits are present; and the counter plea of the value of the blood of Christ, overcomes the natural plea of the sin itself: but I will not dwell upon this, but rather hasten to another thing very considerable, which is,

2. Whose cause it is that Christ pleads with the Father; or, for whom the value and virtue of his blood pleads. I remember the disciples, when Christ spake generally concerning his betraying, were very inquisitive; *Is it I?* saith one; *Is it I?* saith another. I doubt not, but in regard of the prevalency of the plea of the blood of Christ, many persons present will fall upon this enquiry; Is it I that he means? Is he my advocate? Am I his client? I shall endeavour to make it clear, and to resolve it, as the apostle here proposes it.

The plea that Christ puts up for the persons whose cause he undertakes, are all sorts of believers whatsoever, high or low, rich or poor, nay, strong or weak; he pleads their cause, he is the advocate of the weakest believer in the world; nay, more, when he is the greatest sinner, I mean, when he falls foully; when he falls, it may be, through the weakness of his faith, making him suspect that Christ will be silent in his cause, in regard to such failings and sinfulness; he is then so properly the advocate* of such a believer, who, peradventure, falls into some scandalous evil. Mark but the apostle, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" he makes no exception, neither in respect of persons, nor sins; he doth not say, if any man sin merely of infirmity and common frailty; but in general, *If any man sin*; as if he had said, there must something be done by believers, that goes beyond the being of sin, before they can be excluded from having interest in the advocateship of Christ; here he speaks expressly, there is an advocateship of Christ, for believers sinning, without exception. I know it is too frequent among many, that more gross sins than ordinary in a believer, not

* The word *advocate*, in our language, commonly signifies one who is to *plead* for a person in a *court of judicature*: perhaps there is nothing that illustrates the matter more, than the *residence* of some eminent persons from distant provinces, in the *courts* of great princes or states, whose business it was constantly to negotiate with them the *affairs* of those whom they represented, to vindicate them from any unjust *aspersions* and to advance their interest to the utmost of their power.—Doddridge on 1 John 11 1

only waste the conscience, but also interpose between such a person and Christ, of which we shall have occasion to speak elsewhere : for the present, there is a conceit, that if a believer sins more than ordinarily, presently there is a just cause for him to suspect Christ will not sufficiently manage his office for him, at least hath not sufficiently managed it already ; so that there is cause of fear. But, let me tell you, to the everlasting consolation of God's people, that there is no sin, which a believer **can** commit, which can exclude him from the benefit of this advocacy ; or bring him beyond the bounds of this large grant, " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father ;" and, if it be *any man*, you will say, it extends to all men in the world, as well as believers. Nay, there is a restraint in the words, and you shall easily see it ; " If any may sin, *we have* an advocate with the Father ;" if any of us that have fellowship with the Father and the Son ; it is not every one that hath Christ for an advocate, but those that are believers ; those that have right to fellowship with the Father and the Son, are only spoken of in this place. I speak this, to the end, that those who, through fear of death, are subject unto bondage all their lives long, may know that Christ is come to deliver them, and reveals this truth, on purpose to deliver them from the fear of death and bondage, by being their advocate for their sins ; he is an advocate, he is a propitiation for every sin of all believers. The words run in the general to the end. The apostle doth not say, he is not an advocate for such and such believers, that sin so and so ; if they commit sin, so and so aggravated, and their sins rise to such an height, there is no propitiation for them ; but he speaks in the general style, *If any man sin*, and he is the propitiation for *our sins* ; and yet, beloved, I must be bold to go a little further, in respect of the persons whose cause Christ pleads, and in whose behalf he is an advocate ; I say, it is for all sorts of believers ; nay, I go further, it is for more than present ones, even for some who are not so for the present, but remain, as yet, in a state of unbelief. In brief, Christ is the advocate of the cause of every person in the world, for whom he paid the price of redemption, whether they be already called, or not yet acquainted with the grace of God : for every elect person, as well unconverted as converted, Christ equally, in respect of the

lea, interposes ; but, when I say, he pleads as

well for the unconverted as for the converted, I mean for such unconverted persons as belong unto the election of grace, and have their portion in the price of his blood. Beloved, for mine own part, I cannot yet conceive any other considerable difference, between the plea of Christ for converted persons, and the elect unconverted, but this circumstantial one; namely, that the value of his blood is equally of force, to believers and unbelievers, being elected; saving that believers have this privilege, that Christ pleads for the manifestation of this discharge unto them, but not for the present unto the unconverted, till such time as they shall be called to the faith, and, by that faith, that thing be made evident, which before was hid: I say, the pardon of sin, by the blood of Christ, is as full for the unconverted, as fully passed over in grant, I mean, as to the believer himself: God adds never a tittle of pardon itself more to him, that is a believer, than to him not yet converted to the faith, in regard of the substance of it. For the clearing of this to you, I beseech you note, what is the rise or ground-work of the pardon of sin, and when it is complete with God. These two things considered, you shall perceive that all the pardon, in respect of the substance of it, that God passed over unto sinners, is before their conversion; look, I say, upon the rise, or original, of the pardon of sin, it is the gracious grant of God, upon the blood of Christ shed; this is the only foundation of pardon; there is no pardon applicable to any person in the world, but what is to be found in the word of grace. Thou, that art a believer at present, hast the pardon of thy sins in thy spirit, thou art assured of it; where hadst thou this pardon? Didst thou not fetch it out of the word of grace? Then, as soon as that was first published, this grace of pardon was held forth. If thou foundest it not here, then somewhere else; but where will you have this grant to build upon, if you have it not in the word of grace? You will say, the Spirit of God will reveal it unto you. It is true indeed; but if he reveals a grant of grace, it is according to his word. The Spirit speaking out of the word of grace to believers, speaks no otherwise, but according to it, in them; and if there be a contradiction between the inward voice, and this word of grace, it is enough to give you cause of suspicion; yea, you may be confident, that that voice within you, being a contradiction, is false; I say, Christ sends us unto his word, and from that we

take out the pardon of sin. Now, beloved, I beseech you consider, if all pardon to all the elect, to the end of the world, be contained in this word of grace, there is no more pardon than what is written there; then it must needs follow, that God passed over this at that instant, when he entered it in the volume of his book. Is there no pardon till thou art converted? then it is not to be found in this word of grace, because this was written before thy conversion; so that either you must deny the pardon that is properly and truly revealed in the word, and must seek out some newer than is revealed; or you must acknowledge that that is granted unto man, is, in regard of the substance of it, as soon as it was in the volume of his book. Hence it is plain, that as believers coming to believe, fetch out of this word of grace their pardon; so unconverted persons elected, have their grace equally in it, only the Lord hides the publication of it from them, till such time as he is pleased to call them and give them faith to read their portion here as other believers have before. It is true, indeed, though the pardon of every unconverted elect person be equally passed over by the Lord, yet, till their conversion, he gives no more hint of it than he gives to the reprobates themselves. This is that will take away the suspected inconveniences that may follow upon pardon already granted before conversion; for whereas men may think this will make unconverted men presume, to know their pardon before; I say it is true, there is such a pardon for them, but they know it not nor ever shall know it, till they be brought out of darkness to the glorious light of the Lord Jesus Christ: otherwise, how can it be true, that all the sins of God's people, past, present, and to come, are all of them at once pardoned, as the godly learned Protestants say? Whence shall a believer, coming to believe, fetch all his comfort, that all his sins, while he was in rebellion, were pardoned, if there were not a grant of this extant before; upon which, as upon a sure foundation, his believing might stay itself? How comes it to pass, that persons are not cut off before they are called, if their sins are not pardoned, which stand between the wrath of God and them? Nothing else but the blood of Christ stands between them, even between the destroying wrath of God, and his people that commit sin, even before conversion.

In a word, where will you find a new act of God since the

grants registered in his book? Certain I am, that the persons pardoned were not converted, when this was made; and, if there be, or come, after this was first made, a new grant, either it must be entered anew here, or be in a new book by itself. If, therefore, all pardons are as ancient as this record is, then they are more ancient than the present believing of any person that now liveth. Hence we may let persons know, that it is but a rash expression to say, that such and such a person is in the state of damnation (if it be meant he is so before God) while he remains in the state of unconversion; and the wrath of God abides upon that person, though elected, till he be called.

Beloved, let me tell you, the state of the unconverted elect person, is as sure from danger of final miscarriage, as the estate of a saint in glory; saints stand there by the blood of Christ alone, which hath purchased the pardon of sin for the unconverted elect person; so that the same discharge of them, by the blood of Christ, concerns the one as much as the other; but, I say, still the unconverted person cannot make any conclusion from all this, because he cannot know his portion till it be given him to believe.

3. How is Christ qualified for such a vocation as this is? His office is of admirable use to believers; to be a propitiation for their sins, and to get the discharge of God manifested to a person, for whom he pleads it, is of great consolation; so then it must needs be, that the advocate that is to plead the cause, be well gifted for that employment: it is too well known, that a righteous cause many a time miscarries in the world, through the deceitfulness or simplicity of the counsel. When men come upon life and death, it concerns them much to have a skilful awyer to plead for them; or else, for lack of urging that which is most necessary to be pleaded, they miscarry and perish. The Holy Ghost, therefore, beloved, is pleased to impart unto us, not only that Christ is an advocate, and whose cause it is that he pleads, but also communicates unto us the largeness of the gifts of Christ, for the managing of this office. I will not go beyond the text itself, to observe to you the fulness of the gifts of Christ, to manage this advocateship of his; even to that effect and issue that his heart can desire; that is, more than *thy* heart can desire. There are three titles appropriated in this place unto Christ, all of them very aptly and sweetly manifesting his excellent gifts, as

mediator, or as advocate for, or on the behalf of, poor believers, to wit, "Christ Jesus the Righteous;" every title shews how he is gifted.

1. The title *Christ* contains much in it to strengthen our confidence in him that is to plead our cause; it is a word that properly signifies anointed. Now, anointing, if you remember well, carries two things along with it; 1. The separation, or calling of such a person anointed to some special office. 2. The abilities of the person for the office he is called into; so that our advocate being Christ, and called so here, imports unto us, 1. The lawful call of Christ unto it, by him that indeed authorizes him. 2. The large abilities he hath to manage it.

(1.) The title *Christ* imports unto us, his lawful call to plead: you know what the apostle saith in Heb. v. 4—6, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Where he further clears up, how Christ was lawfully called unto it: "The Lord hath sworn," saith he, "and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec:" here is calling. Of what moment is this, will you say? I answer, of great moment: let Christ be ever so able to plead, except the Lord admit him to it, he must hold his tongue. You know in the common law itself, there are students in it, and counsellors, then serjeants at law; a student in the law, it may be, is more able to plead a cause, and can do it better than some serjeant at law, or some others that are called; but yet, because he is not called, he must hold his tongue. Beloved, were Christ our advocate a novice, and not graduated; if he were not called to the bar, though he can plead never so excellently with God, he could not be heard; God will give a call before he hear; so Christ is called.

Yet again, when men are called to be counsellors, they cannot plead at every bar; at the Common Pleas none plead but a serjeant at law; though many counsellors be able lawyers, and better gifted than some serjeants; yet this will not suffice, he is not called to the bar in special; and therefore, they must not come till they have the call as the serjeants have. The Lord doth not bid us seek his face without a mediator; but he that is the advocate at the court in heaven, is the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, the man Christ: he that hath the best rhetoric in the world to plead his cause, must have him as a serjeant to plead

for him ; he cannot be admitted in this court to plead for himself. The ministers of God, are in some sort the pleaders of our cause, yet they themselves must have this serjeant to plead for them, when they come to this tribunal of God, and he alone is admitted to it. And it is a great matter to know what kind of Christ he is, that is singled out ; and then, you must know, that if the world offer this service unto you, to plead your cause before God, it would not avail ; if this man Christ were not freely assigned, and called to plead your cause, you are gone for ever, nothing in the world can be heard but him. You will say, the servants of God are heard when they pray. I say, Christ is only heard when he prays ; you must pray in faith, saith James ; “ Let him not think that he shall obtain any thing of the Lord that wavers ;” he must ask in faith, that is, he must ask in Christ, for faith rests not upon itself, but upon him. It is Christ gets every thing for men ; it is not they themselves, nor their prayers, but it is Christ that prevails : now, this advocate speaks his mind ; and is admitted to do it to the full : but this is not all, he is qualified : that he may plead effectually : there may be some unrighteous judge in the world, that may call men for favour, as a father calls his son, whether he may be qualified or no, that is not regarded ; this man, for some *bye* respects, shall come to the bar ; but God is a righteous judge, that hath no partiality ; Christ indeed is his son, but he is not called merely for favour, but as he calls him, so he breeds him : you know, beloved, that at the inns of court, the judges, and prime lawyers, are teachers of students, and when they find them proficient, they call and admit them to the bar : so Christ is the student ; and the Father instructs and tutors him ; he breeds him up, if I may so speak, *after* the manner of men, to be fit for the advocateship, and when fit, he puts him out into it. You shall find anointing, as in the word Christ, imports gifting of men, when they are called out ; Aaron, was anointed, and gifted to make atonement : and so Saul, when Samuel anointed him, the text saith, “ God gave him another,” a regal *heart* ; when he made him a king, he gave him the heart of one, a *kingly spirit*. And this was that which Solomon prayed for, when the crown was set upon his head, that God would give him a wise and understanding heart, to go in and out before his great people ; and the Lord answered him and gave him wisdom ; so that there

was none before him, nor after him like unto him; even so God did with Christ, he was anointed to be our advocate, and as he anointed him, he gifted him for it, as he saith, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Christ is the person that must bring him help, and therefore must be mighty. In Psal. lxxviii. 18, you see, that God gifted Christ, when he called him forth: "Thou art ascended upon high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." Here the office of Christ is to deliver captives, and for this purpose he must be gifted; if he be not qualified unto it, he will fail in the execution of it. But above all, that place in Isaiah, xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, manifestly clears this matter; "Behold my servant, (saith the Lord), mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth, he shall not fail, neither shall he be discouraged; I will hold him with my right hand, he shall not be dismayed;" here you see how many expressions the Lord useth to shew how he qualifyeth his Son Christ, that so he may be fit to manage his business.

2. He is not only Christ, but he is *Christ Jesus*, and the title further illustrates the excellency of his qualifications to be an advocate; Jesus is a name importing the effectual prevalency of Christ in his plea. I will not stand to clear the signification of it by the etymology of the word; but for a more sensible understanding of it, the word is taken up, and examined by the Holy Ghost himself, in Mat. i. 21, when the angel brings the tidings of his birth, he gave his name; "They shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins;" Jesus is as much as to say, *a Saviour of people from sin*. Now, see how admirably our Saviour is qualified; he hath not only rhetoric and law at his fingers' ends, as we say, but he hath an admirable prevalency in it; there is not any cause that he yet took in hand, that miscarried; not any client that he ever pleaded for, that at any time was cast, but he that pleads is still the Saviour of his people he pleads so, that he saves them from their sins. It is admirable to consider; let the sins produced against a person be ever so many, or heinous; let the witnesses come in, and swear ever so punctually, and prove ever so fully the crimes committed against such a law; yet, such is the faculty of this advocate with the Father, that he stops the judgment, the sentence cannot go forth: this Christ, as he is Jesus, is first the bail of all believers, till the day of payment. You know the nature of bailing; persons should

go to prison presently upon the trespass, but bail takes men off till judgment be given, or perfect satisfaction be made : as we have sinned, so in legality we ought to lie by it presently ; but Christ comes before-hand, even the advocate, and passes his word for us, that there shall be current payment in due time, binding himself body for body, that there shall be appearance at that day ; but that is not all, when the day is come, though most witnesses prove point-blank, the crime objected, and the law pleads the just desert of the punishment provided in that behalf, yet this advocate steps in, and pays all it can demand ; I myself have satisfied the law on that behalf, saith he, therefore there can be no more asked of them. This you know, that if any man borrow an hundred pounds, and if he be sued never so violently, and witnesses come in, and prove the debt never so clearly ; yet if a surety comes in, and enters bond for him, yea, and pays the debt for him ; if he hath been discharged, and hath an acknowledgment of satisfaction made on the behalf of that person, then there is no judgment comes out against him that borrowed the money, though the thing be proved. This is the case with our advocate, he is the surety of a better testament, and pleading, when matter of fact is proved, and the law speaks directly against it, and justice pleads for such a penalty to be inflicted ; yet then is the Saviour produced that makes current and full payment. There could not be expected any stopping of the sentence for the client, by pleading, but there must first be a satisfying of all ; this is the Saviour's office, and as a Saviour, so he is the satisfier.

3. The advocate is *Jesus Christ the righteous* ; and this title imports two things to us, very considerable ; and they have either respect unto us, or unto God, and both of them shew, how admirably and sufficiently he is qualified for this office of advocateship ; as it hath reference unto us, he is *Jesus Christ the righteous* ; as much as to say, the true and faithful. Faithfulness and righteousness are taken for one and the same thing, for dealing truly with persons. Many a one loseth a good cause for the unfaithfulness of his counsel ; they make against their clients for bribes, and play on both sides ; they deal not honestly with men ; they carry the business in a dilatory way ; they will not dispatch, but delay the suit ; but this our advocate, is the faithful and true witness, he dealeth ingenuously and uprightly ;

this one you may trust, and put all things into his hand. Many times men put their whole business into their counsel's hands to sink or swim; but here is an advocate that is faithful, here is no danger of sinking; you may put all into his hands, you need not fear at all, **he** is the righteous and faithful advocate. But the principal thing, I intended in this righteousness, is that wherein the strength of his argument lieth, he pleads in the behalf of his client; that is, the advocate Christ, is so righteous, that this very righteousness of his shall carry the cause on your side, even to a full discharge from all sins whatsoever. Beloved, the whole security of persons from wrath and hell, from sin and death, hangs upon this one hinge of his righteousness; as there is force enough in it, so the cause prospers on the client's side; if that should fail, nothing in the world can uphold it. It will be therefore of mighty concern to consider, how clear the scripture is, that lays all the burthen of the task in pleading upon his righteousness; and further, what kind of righteousness of Christ that is, that carries such a strength in his pleading for his people; both of them need to be cleared, especially the latter. For the first, the scriptures will be clear of themselves; only the latter, what kind of righteousness it is that hath that prevalency, is to be made apparent. A righteousness, and his righteousness, most grant; but some mistake there is, in the minds of some, that reach not the height of the gospel, what that righteousness is, that hath such a prevalency. The present time will not give me leave to handle it fully, and I will not do it by halves; and, therefore, I will leave it to another time.

SERMON XXXVII.

CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS ONLY DISCHARGETH THE
SINNER.

I JOHN ii. 1, 2.

IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER,
JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION
FOR OUR SINS, &c.

IN these words, you have the apostle's conclusion, and his argument to enforce it; his conclusion is, that he would not have them to sin; his argument is, "If any man do sin," &c.

The first thing that we have observed out of these words, is this; that it is a powerful argument to prevail with persons, such as John writes unto, not to sin, to let them know, that though they do, they have an advocate with the Father.

We are fallen upon the consideration of the argument itself. 1. The matter of it. 2. The force of it. Every argument hath some firmness in itself, from whence is produced some good inference; that which hath none in itself, is not able to make good another thing. Concerning the matter of this argument, you have, 1. The apostle's supposition. 2. A provision against that which this supposition might do; or, against that which he supposes a man might do. Here is a supposition, you may sin, though you be little children; the provision against the evil that sin might do, is, *though we sin*, yet we have an advocate with the Father. And, concerning the matter of the argument, we have these things proposed considerable, (1.) What the office is that is here ascribed unto Christ, in that he is called an *advocate*, and how he in heaven exercises this office. (2.) Whose cause it is he pleads by virtue of it. (3.) How he is qualified for it. (4.) The issue and event of the execution of it.

(1.) The advocateship of Christ, is a plea founded upon

justice; Christ doth not appeal in his plea to mere mercy, but his client stands or falls, as justice itself pronounces a sentence. And, concerning the second clause of this first part, Christ exercises this office in heaven, rather virtually, than vocally; he speaks as his blood speaks; "We are come to the blood of sprinkling, (saith the apostle, in Heb. xii. 24,) that speaks better things than the blood of Abel."

We came further to consider, whose cause it is that Christ maintains and pleads; the cause of all believers, even the cause of little children, even when they have sinned without limitation of sin, they commit; for he expresses himself in general terms, it is the cause of those that sin, *If any man sin*. Yea the cause, not only of present believers, but also of all the elect; believers, or unbelievers, if they be elected. It is true, they shall believe in time, but yet, I say, Christ is an advocate of them, while unbelievers, if they be elected. There is not a sin in the world, but as it is damnable in its own nature, in the rigour of justice, so it doth not allow of any forbearance; it is only Christ that makes the forbearance, even until they are called. Then we came to consider, how Christ our advocate is qualified to manage this office with that efficacy and success to the comfort of those whose cause he maintains. The qualifications of Christ are expressed in three things in the text:

1. For the *title*, he is anointed to be an advocate; he hath a lawful call to the bar; nay, he is privileged, there is none to plead but himself; it is Christ anointed, that is, *gifted*; and made an able minister. In Isaiah xlii. 1—4, the Lord tells us, how he shall not be dismayed, he will hold him up, and, "The isles shall wait for his law:" we must understand it two ways; that is, the isles shall now be directed and guided by him as their lawgiver; or, he shall be so good a lawyer, that the isles shall wait for his law; as much as to say, If a man has a cause to be tried, and hears of a good counsel, very expert in the law, he waits for such a man's law, he waits for it out of his mouth; he hopes he will plead his cause so well, that it shall go well with him. God makes Christ so good a lawyer, that when he comes to plead his law, he shall carry the sentence on his client's side.

2. He is *Jesus*, saith the text, and in that is imported a notable qualification of Christ, to exercise his office of advo

cateship, Jesus, as much as a Saviour; and it shews the efficacy of his plea; he pleads the cause of his clients so strongly, that he saves.

3. Another qualification of Christ unto his advocateship, is that he is *Jesus Christ the righteous*; he is so in a double sense, and in both of them is declared the excellent qualification of Christ to advocate for us. 1. He is *the righteous*, that is, the faithful, a counsellor, that will deal truly and uprightly with his client, that will not fail; 2. This advocate is *righteous*, or hath such a righteousness, as that the whole strength of his plea, and the force of his argument he useth in it, lieth altogether in his righteousness. The former expression imports what Christ himself is, this what his argument is; I say, the only argument that hath power to lead the cause, to state the conclusion for the client, the only force lies in the righteousness of Christ; this is that which God looks upon, and which prevails with him, and makes it a righteous thing with him to forgive and discharge a sinner; I say, his righteousness is the hinge upon which the whole frame turns; the pillar upon which all our safety hangs; the only holdfast that keeps us from sinking; if this should fail, nothing else could bear us up; and therefore, of all things in the world, nothing should be more searched into and understood than this one truth; namely, that it is the righteousness of Christ that prevails in plea with God, for a person that sins, and this only. I shall therefore endeavour, for the clearing up of this thing, that the strength of Christ's plea with God lies in his righteousness, to shew you, 1. Evidently out of scripture, that it is this righteousness, and only this, that prevails with God for the discharge of a member of Christ when he sins. 2. Shall consider what this righteousness is that so prevails with him.

1. The scripture, or rather the Holy Ghost, in the word of grace, holds forth this truth frequently unto us; that all the strength of the plea with God, and consequently all the ground of solid comfort unto us, wholly depend upon the righteousness of Christ, and nothing else: look into Psal. l. 5, 6, for David, even in his time, was marvellous clear in this truth; "Gather my saints, (saith the Lord) such as have made a covenant with me by sacrifice, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness." Gather them together, that is, bring them to judgment,

such as have made a covenant with me by sacrifice ; and then, when they stand in judgment, “ the heavens shall declare his righteousness : ” he saith not, “ the heavens shall declare *my* righteousness,” though it is a truth, that they do declare both his and Christ’s ; his in passing sentence of absolution, Christ’s in pleading so for it, that God in justice cannot but pass it. Either understand it thus, the righteousness that shall be pleaded, is that that comes down from heaven, of which we shall speak more hereafter ; or, the righteousness which Christ shall plead, shall be so clear and evident in the prevalency of it, that the sun in the firmament hath not a clearer brightness in it, than this shall have to clear up the business : gather my saints together *that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*. What sacrifice, will you say, or what is there in sacrifice, that the Lord should be in covenant with his people ? Look into Psal. li. 19, you shall there see what there is in sacrifice that makes a covenant between God and his people ; “ Then shalt thou be pleased, (saith David) with the sacrifice of righteousness ; ” righteousness in the sacrifice, is that which procures a pleasantness in God unto those persons unto whom sacrifice belongs, or for whose use sacrifice serves : I say, righteousness in the sacrifice, not an *inherent* righteousness in the typical sacrifice itself ; for, saith the apostle, it is impossible that the “ blood of bulls and goats should take away sin ; ” but there is a righteousness that is declared from heaven, and annexed to the sacrifice, the righteousness of Christ ; this is that which puts an end to the quarrel, and makes an agreement between those that are at difference : and verse 14, you shall see, beloved, David hath such a confidence in the righteousness of Christ, and so makes it his refuge, as that in the greatest of sins he was ever overtaken with, he betakes himself unto it, “ Deliver me, O Lord, from blood-guiltiness ; thou God of my righteousness ; ” there you plainly see deliverance from blood-guiltiness is ascribed unto the righteousness of God ; and he waits for his deliverance, even out of the power that righteousness hath with God ; for that purpose, in Psal. lxxi. 2, you shall see David makes the righteousness of Christ his refuge in extremity, “ Deliver me, O Lord, in thy righteousness ; ” and afterwards how he sticks to this righteousness for refuge still, and will not leave it ; “ My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness : ” and “ I will make

mention of thy righteousness, and thine only," ver. 15, 16. Mark the expression well, let David be in what condition he will, he will make no other plea in the world but this, "thy righteousness, and thine only;" whether you understand it of God's righteousness simply, as judge, or of Christ's righteousness, as he is the advocate, they come all to one reckoning; for, if God delivers in a righteous sentence, or according to righteousness, deliverance proceeds from righteousness pleaded. So that, I say, if you understand it of the Lord, then you must conceive the righteousness of Christ is the ground, why he pronounceth a sentence of righteousness: and in Psal. cxliii. 11, David there again ascribes his deliverance unto righteousness; "Quicken thou me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble."

The prophet Isaiah comes behind none in evangelical sweet truths for the comfort of God's people; he is marvellous full concerning this thing, namely, the discharge of the people of God by the righteousness of Christ. Look into chap. i. 27, "Sion, (saith the Lord there,) shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness;" here you see, beloved, that the church of God shall be brought to judgment; judgment, you know, is a sentence passed by a judge; and there shall be redemption unto Sion even by judgment; and this sentence of a judge must be pronounced for the deliverance of the client; this is our comfort, we shall be saved by righteousness. In Isaiah xli. 2, you shall see how the Lord sets out Christ in this very term, "Who hath raised up the righteous man, and called him to his foot?" "I, the first, and the last," saith the Lord, in ver. 4. Christ, I say, is held forth, as the righteous man raised up for an horn of salvation for us, Luke i. 69. In chap. li. ver. 6, the Holy Ghost tells us, that God will make "judgment to rest for a light of the people;" that is, when the Lord brings his people unto judgment, it shall be a lightsome day unto them, and though it is, yet who can stand before his judgment? Mark the ground of the lightness of it when they shall come unto their trial; "My righteousness 'is near, (saith the Lord), my judgment is gone forth, my salvation is gone forth;" therefore it should be a lightsome day, because there shall be righteousness in it to plead out that judgment that shall be given on the behalf of the clients of Christ: in Isa. liii. 11; "He shall see of the

travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied ;” that is, God shall see the travail of the soul of Christ, and shall be satisfied. But how comes it to pass, that God is pacified by beholding the travail of the soul of Christ ? “ By his knowledge (saith he) shall my righteous servant justify many.” There is a great deal of difficulty to understand the meaning of the phrase *righteous servant*. For my own part, I think the plain sense carries much light in it ; as much as to say, Christ knows so much concerning the prevalency of his own righteousness with the Father, that he shall be sure to carry the cause in the behalf of his clients when he pleads it for their justification, when they come to their trial. In Isa. lix. 16, the Lord, saith the text, wondered that there were none, that he could find never an intercessor ; therefore, as it follows, “ My arm hath brought salvation ;” but how doth his arm bring salvation ? “ my righteousness it sustained me.” Observe it well, there is none in the world to deal with God on the behalf of men, but the Son of God, Christ himself, there could not one come in to help him ; there is a mighty charge laid against poor believers, containing such a bulk of transgressions, with so many aggravations, that Christ himself had sunk under them, being alone, had not his righteousness sustained him ; this was that which held him up in the whole plea, till the sentence was given on the behalf of his clients ; for he put on righteousness as a breast-plate. In Jerem. xxiii. 5, 6, “ Behold, the days come, I will raise up a righteous branch unto David ; in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and the name wherewith he shall be called, is, the Lord our righteousness.” Here is a righteous branch raised up, then follows, *they shall be saved*. How so ? In that there is a righteous branch to plead for them, Israel shall dwell safely, and Judah shall be saved, in the world, and from the world ; a righteous branch being raised up, Judah shall be saved from the wrath of God himself, that it shall not break out. God himself shall not cast Judah out of possession, not only Judah in the letter, but also in the spiritual sense ; God in judgment shall not cast out Israel, because this righteous branch is raised up, which shall in righteousness establish them to dwell safely : and the reason of all this is notably rendered ; namely, in that this righteousness is become ours, and he is so become our righteousness, that his very name is, *The Lord our righteousness*.

It is very well worth your observation, how still the last refuge is fastened upon the righteousness of Christ. In Dan. ix. 24, "Yet seventy weeks are determined upon thy holy city;" to what purpose? "To finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Mark it well; the sealing up of the vision, that is, the establishment of the forgiveness of sins, follows after the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, and this is the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, in Mal. iv. 2, healing is appropriated unto Christ, and shewn where the virtue lies, that he hath such healing: "Unto them that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;" therefore, a healing Sun, because he is the Sun of righteousness; and the virtue in the wing of Christ to heal, is his righteousness. I have been more copious in these passages of scripture, before the coming of Christ, that people may not think, that to depend only and solely upon his righteousness, for security and comfort, is a new thing, but was known, and was a refuge from the beginning. The apostle Paul speaks more clearly than any of the rest; I shall instance but in two passages; for the truth is, all the epistles of the apostles are full of this thing. The strength of the plea of Christ, in the behalf of his people sinning, stands in his righteousness; for this purpose, look into Rom. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12; see how mightily the apostle pleads to the convincing of all the world of sin, and the fruit of it; from verse 13, is a description of the sins of men; and in verse 20, he makes a conclusion; "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Now, after he had taken off all that might possibly be in man towards his remedy, or in the law for people to rest in, he begins to establish the foundation upon which the safety and security of God's people depends: but now, saith he, in verse 21, "The righteousness of God without the law, is manifested, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that do believe; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." You see here is an inculcating again and again, that it is Christ's righteousness, which God hath set forth to be a propitiation; to declare this upon all, imports unto us, the sole refuge for the remission of sins is only that righteousness: look

also in Rom. v. 18, 19, "As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous." Our transgressions are the issue which Adam's disobedience brought forth; that obedience of one man is our security, and deliverance from hell and death, which one man's disobedience brought into the world; all of it is frustrated by the obedience and righteousness of that one; nothing but that setting persons free from the fruits of unrighteousness, and disobedience in Adam, is able to make them righteous: I hope, by this time, the truth is cleared enough, that there is nothing to be mentioned, but only his righteousness; nothing can be a plea, but that. You shall therefore consider, out of all these passages, what that righteousness is, that has efficacy and prevalency with the Father, for the discharge of a member of Christ when he sins.

1. Negatively; there is not any righteousness of a believer which he acts, which can possibly have any force in plea with the Father for his discharge that hath committed sin; I mention that righteousness which he acts, because the very righteousness of Christ itself is, indeed, the righteousness of a believer; for, he is "the Lord our righteousness," as you have heard. As he was made sin by imputation, so we are made the righteousness of God in him; that is, Christ's righteousness is as much become our own, as our sins became Christ's: and as Christ bore the whole fruit of our sins, by being made sin for us, so we enjoy the whole fruit of Christ's righteousness, by being made righteous in him; therefore, I say, not simply no righteousness of a believer, but none which he himself acts, hath the least force in plea, to prevail for the discharge of sin. I must tell you, there is no divine rhetoric, or omnipotent excellency, in any righteousness whatsoever, which a believer can put up unto God; it is not your turning from your evil ways; your repentance, though never so cordial and large, nor your departing from iniquity, or your doing good, hath the least force of plea with the Father, to prevail with him, by it, for your discharge; or to move him to give the sentence upon you, that you are discharged. No righteousness, I say, whatsoever you can do; for the best righteousness that ever man did perform, Christ only excepted, hath more in it to make against him, than for him to obtain a sentence of discharge; and my reason is this, in the best righteousness of man,

in turning from sin, repenting, or mourning, or whatever else there is to be thought of, there is abundance of sin, even in the very best actions that are performed; and where there is, there is a plea against the person; so that if you bring that righteousness to plead with God, to prevail with him, you bring that which may be rejected against you, and may prove a strong plea, or mar the cause that is in hand. I beseech you, beloved, observe the apostle in Rom. vii. 18—22, 23, where, I think, I shall meet with these things, which most people in ignorance commonly make their chiefest plea, whereon they build their whole comforts, as if all were between God and them thereby; yet, you shall there find, how the apostle, though qualified in that manner as he was, both renounces any such plea, and, also, betakes himself to that in hand; he saith expressly, “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not: I delight in the law of God, in the inner man; but I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the law of sin;” out of all which, observe, I beseech you, these particulars.

The apostle, though he said he fell through infirmity, yet he clearly perceived his heart was upright towards God; “To will is present with me; the good that I would do, that do I not; and the evil that I would not do, that do I.” Though he was overtaken, yet his heart was towards God still: when he did evil, his heart said plainly, it is not with my consent; when he could not do good, his heart told him, it was for lack of power, and not because he did not desire it: now, come to persons that walk exactly, as he did, they are overtaken with a sin; what is their comfort when they sin? Though I be overtaken, the frame of my heart is right still; my heart is sincere towards God; it is directly contrary to my disposition; I do not do that evil I do, with a full bent of my spirit; and in regard my heart is thus right, there is comfort in me, though I have sinned: suppose your spirits were in that frame the apostle’s was in at that time; I ask but this, do you not draw comfort still from the plea of this disposition your spirits make? When you have committed a sin, do you not fetch comfort from thence? Ask your hearts, and they will answer, yea, we have done so. I beseech you, consider it well, when the apostle had urged the case thus, what was the final conclusion, and the sole refuge that he flies unto, or the

plea that he would trust unto, for his deliverance and comfort? He doth not say in the conclusion, "I thank God, to will is present with me;" I thank God, my heart is in a good frame and temper, though I was overtaken; I say, Paul doth not make use of this plea, but he betakes himself to this: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ; and it is the law of the spirit of life that is in Christ, has freed me from the law of sin and death." So that the whole refuge of the apostle was not in any inward disposition, as if he could plead out comfort unto himself therefrom; but the plea was without himself, even in Christ, and, therefore, he gives thanks unto him for deliverance: so in Philip. iii. 5—9, he pleads the same thing there, as he did here; namely, that it is not any righteousness that he can reach unto, he dare venture the plea, or his own comfort upon: first, he tells us, that "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless:" this was before his conversion, you will say: it is true; but after his conversion, he tells us also of a righteousness he had then; but, beloved, doth Paul put out his own righteousness to plead for him? Doth he expect his comfort, or the answer of heaven for discharge, upon the plea of that? Nothing less; for, saith he, "I account all things but loss and dung, that I may be found in him: not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ." Surely, beloved, if he had reckoned that his righteousness could have had any force in plea, he would never have rejected it as dung: that man that thinks he hath strength in an argument, will not fling it away, and not make mention of it for the trial of his cause. But this the apostle did; he accounted his righteousness dung, even that after he was converted; and, in that regard, he durst not be found in it, but only in the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ. He doth not simply say, he would not be found in the righteousness of the law; but exclusively also, he would not be found in his own righteousness; so that he bars it quite out; there shall no plea at all go along through it: the righteousness of Christ shall be his plea, or else he would look for no good issue at all: this, beloved, is the way.

Let me give one touch by way of application; you may easily perceive how mightily people are mistaken, and, therefore, no

marvel they live so uncomfortably ; that they are in fear of death, and thereby in bondage all their life long, while they run, for the refreshment of their spirits, to their own righteousness, to the plea of their own works, and will have their hearts eased upon that which they themselves do ; whereas, nothing gets a gracious discharge from their Father, but only Christ, and his righteousness. Therefore, beloved, however it may, with some, be a harsh thing to take men off from their own righteousness, in respect of speaking comfort unto them, and to lead them to the righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel, as that from which they may draw all their comfort : though this may sound harsh to some people that have not been trained up in the way of the grace of God, and in the freeness of it, revealed in the gospel ; yet, I doubt not, but in time the Lord will be pleased to reveal to us, that running to Christ out of ourselves, and disclaiming our own righteousness and comfort from it ; that leaving our own actions, and all that can be imagined to be in us, or can be done by us, will be the thing that, in the end, will establish our own hearts and spirits, yea, and “ fill them with joy and peace in believing.”

It remains, that we should further consider one thing, that I know startles some persons, or, at least, lays blocks in their way, before I can possibly come unto the righteousness of Christ itself, that makes up the strength of plea with God for poor creatures.

Some will object, though all that we do of our own will not hold plea ; yet there is a righteousness of faith that pleads with the Father, and gets the discharge of sin from him : beloved, there is some dispute about this point, and I shall not desire to enter into it ; I shall only, in a few words, endeavour to clear up the truth, as possibly I may, that I may go on.

I answer, in general, so far as the righteousness of faith is the righteousness of Christ, there is strength in the plea of it ; but this must be considered merely as it is Christ alone, and not as it is any righteousness of faith itself. If any strength of faith be brought in, as concurrent to that righteousness that pleads out the discharge of a sinner, over and above what is simply and only Christ's own ; I say, it is not to be pleaded, nor hath power, or force, in plea, at all. I shall give two or three passages by way of hint ; it is true, the apostle, in Rom. x. 8, tells us, “

righteousness of faith speaks on this wise ;” importing, what indeed before was called the righteousness of God himself, they submitted not to ; but, beloved, I take it, the righteousness here, is called the righteousness of faith, as faith is the hand that closes with the righteousness of God ; not as if this righteousness were properly faith, but merely objective, as we say ; faith, as it lays hold upon that righteousness which is only Christ the object thereof. In Rom. i. 16, the apostle saith, “ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.” Mark it well, here is the power of God to salvation revealed ; in what is the power of God to salvation ? It is in the gospel, of which he was not ashamed ; so that, though the power of God to salvation, is to every one that believeth, that is not in believing, but in the gospel. And what is the gospel there ? Certainly not faith, but the object of it ; for it is said to be revealed from faith to faith. If you look into Luke ii. 10, you shall see plainly what the gospel of Christ is : an angel came from heaven to the shepherds, and speaks thus : “ Behold, I bring you glad tidings (that is, I *evangelize*, so the word is in the original) I bring you glad tidings of exceeding great joy ; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, that is Christ the Lord.” The word *gospel*, in Romans, is the very same word drawn from the same theme with that in Luke ; it is as much as to say, the gospel is glad tidings of great joy ; and what are these glad tidings ? “ A Saviour is born unto you.” So Christ, a Saviour, born to men, is the gospel ; and, saith the apostle, “ I am not ashamed of it ;” that is, I am not ashamed of Christ born a Saviour, for this reason ; “ Christ is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.” In 1 Pet. i. 5, the apostle tells us, “ We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ;” where it is plainly imported, that faith unto salvation is but a mere channel through which the righteousness of Christ runs ; not communicating any righteousness itself, by which a man may stand righteous before God, or have a discharge by the Lord, or from him. This I would fain know, beloved, in every, or in any act of believing, is that absolutely perfect and complete, without any defect or weakness ? or, is there some imperfection ? There is some, you will say. If then, this I would fain know, how that thing, that hath imperfection, unrighteousness in itself, can con-

stitute a person, by itself, righteous ; can faith, chargeable with unrighteousness, make a person, unrighteous in himself, stand righteous before God ? The apostle, in Heb. vii. 26, telling us of Christ, saith, “ It behoveth us to have such an high priest, harmless, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners :” if Christ himself had had sinfulness with his righteousness, that very righteousness of Christ itself, would not have served the turn ; and therefore, it behoved him to be holy, harmless, and undefiled, and without offence. Beloved, Christ himself could not constitute us righteous before the Father, if he himself had not been holy, and without sin ; and can it be imagined, that faith, that hath unrighteousness in it, can make us righteous ? This is the sum of that I shall speak at this time. I hope, the things I have spoken will not be offensive to any ; for I desire freely, that this, and all that I have, or shall deliver unto you, may be received as they agree with the light of the gospel ; that is to be the rule to measure all truths by ; and the rest, that remains, I shall come to the next day. -

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE ACT OF BEGINNING IS NOT OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU, THAT YOU SIN NOT : AND IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS ; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.

WE have observed already, from the connection of both verses together, (the latter containing an argument in it, to enforce a charge in the former) that the making known of this discharge from sin, before sin be committed, is so far from opening a gap.

unto licentiousness, that it is one of the best means in the world to restrain men from it. Then we came to consider the argument, and, in it, the matter and force of it. The argument to prevail with men not to sin, is, "That if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father."

We have considered what this advocateship is, and shewed it is a plea grounded upon justice ; and for whose cause it is : it is the cause of believers, even when they sin ; and not only of present believers, but of the elect, though not yet believers, which yet in time shall be. We came also to consider how Christ, this advocate, is qualified for this office. His qualifications are in the three titles attributed unto him. 1. He is Christ ; that imports a lawful call, and a sufficient furnishing with skill to plead. 2. He is Jesus, importing the efficacy of his plea ; he pleads so well, that he saves his people from their sins ; he carries the cause. 3. Another qualification for this office is imported in the attribute of righteousness ; "Jesus Christ the righteous ;" and that contains in it the strength of his plea, whereby he attains to the salvation of those whose cause he pleads. Concerning this last attribute we have observed that the righteousness of Christ contains in it the strength of his plea, as advocate, whereby he becomes the propitiation for the sins of his clients ; I say, the strength of his plea lies in this that he is "Jesus Christ the righteous ;" we have therefore proposed to be considered, how clear the scripture is in this truth, that it is his righteousness that carries the cause of a poor believer when he hath sinned, and gets the discharge for his sin after it is committed ; I cannot insist upon the scriptures mentioned, they are very plentiful. We came further to consider, what this righteousness of his is, that hath such a strength of plea in it ; the resolution of this I distributed into two heads, 1. Negative. 2. Affirmative.

1. The righteousness which carries away the cause, and obtains the discharge of a believer's sin, is no righteousness of his own, no not so much as the righteousness of faith, as it is our act of believing. Here we left the last day. I will give you a touch of the impossibility that faith should so plead for the discharge from sin, in its own name or strength, as to carry the cause on the side of this person sinning. It is true, the apostle speaks of the righteousness of faith in Rom. x. 6, a righteousness of faith

there is, indeed ; but that which is here ascribed unto faith, is afterwards appropriated to the word ; that is, unto the gospel, which is the righteousness of faith that speaks on this wise ; “ Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend up into heaven ? that is, to bring Christ from thence ; or who shall descend into the deep ? ” But what saith it ? “ The word is nigh thee, in thy heart, and in thy mouth. ” That is, the word of faith, and so not the righteousness of a man’s own act of believing. I cannot dwell upon what I have delivered before.

There are some things briefly to be considered, even about our believing, as it hath a stroke in discharge from sin, or the pardon of sin. The truth is, beloved, some hand faith hath in this business ; but it is not any righteousness, in the act of believing, that carries any stroke in it. If you will consider it well, you shall easily see, there is no more righteousness in our believing as we act it, than there is in any other gracious act whatsoever we do ; than is in our love of God ; nay more, there is as much sin in our act of believing, as in our other acts. There is no man under heaven hath attained unto that height of believing, or strength of faith, but there is still something wanting, some imperfection and sin in it : and as there is weakness and imperfection in believing, so it is not possible that this should give forth such a righteousness, as to constitute a person, who is unrighteous in himself, to be righteous before God. That which cannot set itself complete and righteous before God, can never set another righteous before him. Faith must be first just itself, or else it is not possible it should ever, by the righteousness of its own act, justify another. Beloved, whatever the scriptures speak concerning faith justifying, it must of necessity be understood objectively, or declaratively : either faith is said to be our righteousness, in respect of Christ only, who is believed on ; and so it is not the righteousness of his own act of believing, but the righteousness of him that is apprehended by that act ; or else you must understand it declaratively, that is, whereas all our righteousness, and discharge from sin, flowing only from Christ alone, is an hidden thing ; that which in itself is hid to men, becomes evident by believing ; and, as faith makes the righteousness of Christ evident to the believer, so it is said to justify by its own act, declaratively, and no otherwise. And whereas in Rom. v 1, the apostle saith, “ Being justified by faith, we

have peace with God." In ch. viii. 33, he saith, "It is God that justifieth." Now, I beseech you, compare these texts together; then tell me, whether the act of believing, except it hath reference to the object, which is Christ, of itself justifies, or how else these two places can be reconciled: it is God that justifieth, and it is faith that justifieth; faith is not God, neither is God faith. If therefore it be faith, in respect of its own act, that justifieth, it is not God that justifieth us; and, if it be God that justifieth, then it is not faith, in respect of its own act; how will you reconcile it? When therefore the Holy Ghost speaks of faith justifying, it speaks of it as laying hold upon God for our justification; and, therefore, though faith here appears as that which lays hold upon the righteousness of God, yet it cannot be said to be that righteousness that justifies us.

But, I know, some will be ready to say, it is not to be understood as if faith had any innate power of its own, to procure the discharge from sin; but it is to be understood as the instrumental cause, that lays hold upon that justification; and so it goes before the justification of a person, and it is to be understood no otherwise.

I shall desire to keep in the plain path for the clearing up of this truth, and, so far as possible may be: I abhor to walk in the clouds, in a truth that so highly concerns the comfort, and establishing the consciences and spirits of men; and therefore, I say, that faith, as it lays hold upon the righteousness of Christ, doth not bring this righteousness of Christ to the soul, but only declares the presence of it in the soul that was there, even before faith was. I beseech you, mark me well; I know, beloved, I have very many catching ears about me; I speak it the rather, that there may be more wariness, because there are frequent misunderstandings of the things I deliver, especially by those that come to catch. I say again, there is no person under heaven, reconciled unto God, justified by him through the righteousness of Christ, but he is justified and reconciled before he believes. * And therefore faith is not the instrument radically to unite Christ and the soul together; but rather is the fruit that follows and flows from Christ the root, being united beforehand to the persons that believe; so that the efficacy and power of

* See the notes in p. 91, 92. Vol. I.

believing, is to be instrumental for the declaration of an act that was done before, only it was hid. For the clearing up of this to you, beloved, consider that expression in Heb. xi. 1; "Faith, (saith the apostle) is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Here he doth not give any efficacy to faith, to procure or bring forth a new thing; but he gives to faith only an evidencing power, and that not to evidence any new thing, but to be an evidence of things not seen; that is, of things that were before in being, but were hid; but by faith come to be apparent, and cease to be hid, when the evidence of faith brings them forth to light: either you must say it is not in being till faith is come, and so it doth more than evidence, even beget, and give being to the very thing, or you must confess the thing indeed was; but faith makes it evident that before was hid and obscure. Now, though faith be honoured with the greatest business of all the gifts of the spirit of God; yet that Christ may not be robbed of that which is peculiar unto him, and properly his own, that is, in the giving complete being to our justification, and be given also (which cannot be) to faith itself; I say, give me leave to propose to you some particulars, wherein it is as clear as the day-light, that it is impossible for any person under heaven to believe, till such time as he be first united unto Christ, and become one with him; and that faith, being but a fruit that flows from our union with him, is not the uniter that knits Christ and a person together; I shall not need insist upon that place I have often made mention of in Ezek. xvi. 7, 8, the time when God fastened his love upon the church, was the "time of blood. when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee live. Thy time was the time of love;" that is, the time of thy blood, that he spake of before, was the time of love; "And I spread my skirt over thee, and I sware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine; then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed thee from thy blood." Here is first loving and spreading the skirt over the church before it is washed; not first washing, and then loving and spreading the skirt over them; but after that comes washing, and thoroughly washing from blood. If any man think that this washing is to be understood of sanctification; consider whether or no there be a thorough washing from blood, as that the person so washed is presently all fair; or, as the prophet speaks, ex-

pressly in that chapter, *complete in beauty* ; that is, perfect, and that through his comeliness put upon him.

But to go on, consider, I beseech you, beloved, that expression in Isa. xliii. 22, 23 ; the Lord there is pleased to declare himself, concerning his people, in what a condition they were ; “ Thou hast not called upon me, but thou hast been weary of me : yea, thou hast wearied me with thy sins, and thou hast made me to serve with thy transgressions,” saith the Lord. And mark what follows ; “ I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins :” here the people, whose sins God blotted out, are not considered as believing ; but as a people that wearied God with their sins, and made him to serve with their transgressions : they are considered as a people that had not so much as a heart to call upon God, but were quite weary of him ; and even while he considers them thus, even then, he, for his own sake, blots out their transgressions.

And in Isaiah liii. 6, whereof I spake so largely heretofore, you shall see plainly, there is nothing but sin considered in the person, whose iniquities the Lord laid upon Christ ; “ All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and he hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Here is not a consideration of people as believing, as though there must be that, before there can be a discharge from sin ; but of people before they are believing, even while they are gone astray, and turning every one to their own way. But the most notable expression of all, to this purpose, is in John xv. 4, 5 ; I desire you, that you would seriously consider the strength of Christ’s plea in that place ; comparing himself, in ver. 1, he saith, “ I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman :” but the main thing to be observed is this : “ Abide in me, as the branch abideth in the vine ; for, as the branch that abideth not in the vine, cannot bring forth fruit, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” Out of which passage, I shall briefly observe these particulars ; wherein, I hope, it will be clear, and plain unto you, that it is impossible a person should believe, till Christ hath united himself to him. I know, beloved, there is none, or, at least, I cannot meet with any yet, that will deny, but that faith is a fruit of the branch that groweth upon the vine ; that is, one of the fruits of the Spirit, that are wrought by the Spirit of Christ.

in those that are his: for, in Gal. v. 22, the apostle reckons up the fruits of the Spirit, and he takes up faith for one among the rest. If, therefore, believing be a fruit that persons bear, by virtue of union to the vine Christ, then, it must needs follow, they must first be in him, and then believe; for, if persons believe before they are united, and their union be by a faith that they act, then the branch must bear this fruit before it be in the vine, before there be union; and, if faith be the uniter, it is present before the union be made, and so the branch bears fruit before it abides in the vine, contrary to Christ's words: for it is affirmed, that it is faith that makes the union, and therefore cannot be a fruit of it. Beloved, this I would fain know of any person, is faith the gift of Christ, or no? Is it Christ that works faith in those that believe in him, or no? The apostle (in Heb. xii. 2,) saith expressly, that Christ is the author of our faith. Is he the author of faith, and yet is that faith the author of our union unto him? Can a father beget a child, and yet this child beget his own father? Doth Christ beget faith in us by virtue of our being united unto him? and shall this faith beget that union of which it was but a fruit? From whence shall persons that believe, before they are united unto Christ, receive this faith of theirs? They are not yet united unto Christ, and, therefore, it cannot come from him, for we can have nothing of him but by virtue of union; and then it proceeds not from the Spirit of Christ, for we partake of that only by virtue of union with him too; from whence should it come then? If you have it not from him, by virtue of union, it is not from the vine that his person is incorporated into already, because there must be union before there can be communion; all communion with Christ, all participating of any thing, proceeds from the union persons first have with him; he is the root, and as the branch is incorporated into the body and root, so sap and influence is communicated and floweth out into the branch from the root. But this (you will say) is but a parabolical expression, and parables prove nothing.

I answer, whereas Christ is pleased to apply the parable, his application of it hath as full a proof in itself, as any scripture whatsoever. Now, in this place, you shall find, that Christ makes exact application of it himself, for the purpose we now speak of: "As the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the

vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me: I am the vine, ye are the branches," &c. Ye cannot bring forth fruit, except ye abide in the vine; and do you abide in it, when you are not united unto Christ? No man can say it. Can you bring forth fruit before you are in the vine? Can you believe before you are in Christ? Beloved, it is as great an absurdity to say you can, as to say, a branch can bring forth fruit without a root. So that, beloved, you must hold this for an undeniable truth, you cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in the vine. I can bring many other passages for the further proof of this thing, but this will suffice. Mistake me not, I do not any way aim at any derogation to believing; but my desire is, that it might have its proper office, and not encroach upon the office of Christ himself. It is the Lord himself, of his own mere grace, without respect to any thing that believers can or will do, that makes him give his Son Christ unto them, that he might be the justification of them. In Isa. xlii. 6, you see, Christ is given as a covenant by the Father, before ever we have eyes to see, or faith to behold Christ: "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes." He himself, as the covenant, and as given, must open the blind eyes, or else they shall never be opened. We must not have our eyes opened, and then have Christ given to us; but he is first given, and then our eyes are opened. We must not believe, that so we may be in covenant with Christ; but we must first be in covenant with him, and then believing must follow as the fruit of it. If we have faith before we be united unto Christ, or our eyes be opened before Christ be given to be the covenant, then he is anticipated; for, whereas he comes on purpose to open the blind eyes, and is given for this very thing, this work is done before he comes; and so his coming, and the end of it, are made frustrate and in vain. In brief, suppose that our faith acts towards the discharge of our transgressions; then it must follow, it is not only the righteousness of Christ that pleads, by way of advocateship, with the Father for it. If thou comest to the Lord, and plead out that for thyself, by virtue of thy faith, which his righteousness alone was appointed to do; and dost not wholly cast thyself upon that, as that which will bear thee out in all thy approaches to God; but join thy faith withal in the manner I have spoken, and say, in thy heart, I believe, and in that plead thy discharge; if

this into your plea for the discharge of sin, Christ only is not your sole advocate, but your faith also concurs with him in this office of advocateship, and so you make it your Saviour; than which, what can be more dishonourable and more derogatory unto this glorious office of his? For, if we must believe before God will justify us, then the simple and only plea of Christ's righteousness alone, is not all-sufficient for God to pardon, or to discharge sin: for, suppose I have not yet believed, the righteousness of Christ, it seems, hath not strength enough, till my believing come in, and join with that righteousness; but it is only the righteousness of Christ, that pleads out the justification of a person, and not the concurrence of believing; our believing, I confess, gives comfortable testimony, that God hath freely justified persons in and through the alone righteousness of his Son Christ; it conduces to the declaration and manifestation of that, which God for Christ's righteousness' sake did; by faith we have evidence of this thing, but it is not our believing that works the thing itself: now, it remains, we go on and consider,

2. Affirmatively, what this righteousness of his is, that carries the whole strength of the plea, for the discharge of the people of God from their sins which they have committed; I say, it is his righteousness, and his alone. Now, this righteousness is to be considered in the quality, quantity, and nature of it: concerning the quality and quantity of it, in brief; that righteousness that hath the strength of plea, for the discharge of the sins of God's own people, both for quantity and quality, must be so powerful, large, and spacious, that it may serve to cover the whole nakedness of the person whom it doth concern; this righteousness of his hath so much spaciousness in it, that it will serve to cover all; as large as the want is, so far it can cover. See how the Lord taxes the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17, 18: "Behold, thou sayest thou art rich, and art full of goods, and hast need of nothing;" well, notwithstanding her high conceit of herself, that she was rich, yet she was poor, and naked, and lacked all things; and my counsel is, saith he, "That thou buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear." Here Christ puts the church upon the way by which she may be secured from that he charges her withal, poverty, wretchedness, blindness, and nakedness; the course he puts her upon, is to receive of him gold and white

raiment; it is white, there is the excellent purity of it; and so large and spacious, that if she should be covered therewith, not a jot of the shame of her nakedness shall appear. And in Rev. xix. 8, you shall plainly see, that this white raiment is nothing else but the righteousness of the saints: "And it was granted unto her, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; which is the righteousness of the saints;" not the righteousness acted by the saints, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and that is the pure, clean, and white linen: so in Ezek. xvi. 8, you find this righteousness expressed, by a skirt spread over a person, to cover the shame of his nakedness. The sum is only this: the righteousness of Christ is such, that there is a complete fulness in it to serve for every purpose, to extend itself to the utmost of every transgression; there is not so large a spreading of sinfulness, but this righteousness spreads itself perfectly over all, that none of it appears*. But all the difficulty still lies, what righteousness this is of Christ, that is expressed to be so full, large, and pure? For answer to this, you know there are two distinct natures in Christ; he is perfect God, and complete man, and answerably, there are two distinct righteousnesses in Christ; there is the essential righteousness of Christ, inseparable from his godhead; and there is also the righteousness of the humanity: now, though it be true, that in respect of the ineffable union of these two natures, both these are inseparable from the person of Christ; yet it is as true, there is no more confounding of them, than there is of the natures in the person, but we must consider as distinctly the one as the other. Now, the question lieth mainly in this, which of them it is which pleads the discharge of a sinner, whether the righteousness of God, simply as God, or the righteousness of the human nature? I answer, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ: God, simply considered, nor the human nature, is Christ; but it is God and man, ineffably united in one, that makes up Christ. Accordingly, I say, as Christ consists of God and man jointly, so the righteousness that becomes the righteousness of Christ's people, is the righteousness of both united, and not of each severally. The simple righteousness of the humanity of Christ alone, is too short and narrow to cover all the filth of all the sins of all the members of Christ; the simple essential righteousness of the

* Psalm xxxii. 1. Rom. v. 20.

godhead alone, is not communicable to the persons of men ; it is a righteousness of God-man that carries the strength of plea for the discharge of a sinner, and something from both natures must necessarily concur to the discharge of sin.

The righteousness of the human nature of Christ consists of two things, 1. Active ; 2. Passive obedience ; in doing the will of God commanded, and in suffering the will of God imposed upon him ; this, I say, is the righteousness of his human nature. God, as he is simply considered, is not capable of either of these two righteousnesses ; he is not capable of obedience, because there is no supreme above him, to whom he should yield it ; nor of passion, he is not subject to suffer ; therefore this obedience, and suffering, are properly the actions and passions of the human nature ; yet both concur necessarily towards the discharge of a believer from sin : his active obedience in doing, his passive obedience in suffering, the will of God. Compare these things together, as they stand in Rom. v. 18, 19, you shall plainly perceive, that the obedience, the doing of the will of God, is one branch of righteousness requisite in Christ towards the discharge of persons from their sins ; “ As by the offence of one man, judgment came upon all men to condemnation (saith the apostle), so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all to the justification of life ;” here is a comparison, or rather an opposition, set between Adam’s offence, and Christ’s righteousness ; as the one brought judgment, so the other brings justification and life to us ; yea, but what is that righteousness, that is there spoken of, will you say ? the apostle will tell you plainly ; “ For, as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous.” Observe it well, we are made righteous ; how ? by the obedience of one ; that one is Christ. Well, but what is this obedience ? It is an obedience set in opposition to Adam’s disobedience. What was Adam’s disobedience ? the breach of the law. What must Christ’s obedience be then, but the fulfilling of it ? So it must be certainly true, it is directly against the gospel of Christ, to exclude the active obedience of Christ, from the power and share to plead out the cause of those that believe ; I say, the active obedience of Christ comes in to make the plea for this discharge ; and, as the active, so likewise the passive obedience of Christ too ; the scripture is more full in

this, than in the other, because it is the complement of all, the last thing Christ went through for the discharge of the sins of his people: you shall see there is no fruit that illustrates the discharge of a person from sin; hence it is appropriated unto Christ's sufferings. If you speak of reconciliation, which consists of God's acceptance of persons, and his agreeing with them in the death of all controversy, between him and them; for that is reconciliation, when persons that were at variance, are now made friends, and all things that were objected between them are answered, and no more for one to say against another; I say, if you speak of this reconciliation to God, it is appropriated to the blood of Christ; as in Rom. v. 10, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?" So that reconciliation, you see, is attributed to the death of Christ; that was the last act of the Son of God for man; so again, "You, who were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Here you see the same thing in substance, given unto the blood of Christ, though in other words: men that were afar off, that God was at controversy with, who were at great distance from him, by the blood of Christ are made nigh again: so likewise the satisfaction that God takes for the discharge of sin, which he hath acknowledged, is said to be the travail of the soul of Christ: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The apostle speaks in the general, in his epistle to the Hebrews, without blood there is no remission of sins; "Christ entered with his blood once, into the holy of holies; and thereby he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Infinite it were to quote scripture for the illustration of this, that to the sufferings of Christ, (which are indeed all summed up in the shedding of his blood, because that was the last, and chief of all) all blessings are attributed, as reconciliation, adoption, &c.

Again, beloved, though it be most true, that the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature must concur, to make up a righteousness, yet both these together are not enough, there must be something more than all this. That is strange, will some say; what can there be more required, than the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up the righteousness of a person? Is not that sufficient? Let me tell you, beloved,

what the Holy Ghost speaks of the righteousness whereby we come to be righteous and discharged from sin; he speaks in a higher strain than to appropriate it to the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature only. In Rom. x. 3, when the apostle taxeth the Jews for going about to establish their own righteousness, he taxeth them also with this, that "they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God:" in 2 Cor. v. 21, "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I say, therefore, beloved, that the righteousness by which we attain to our discharge from sin, and the pleading out that, is the righteousness of God. The righteousness that gives the full discharge to persons from sin, must have something that is proper to God himself, added to the human righteousness of Christ, as giving dignity to it; I say, something proper to God, that must concur with the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up a complete righteousness for the discharge of a sinner. It is a known rule, nothing can give more than it hath itself; the active and passive human obedience of Christ can give no more than it hath in itself. Now, man considered as a sinner, hath need of more than barely the human active and passive obedience of Christ, to make him righteous; the sin that man commits, hath its extent according to the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. You know, beloved, that crimes against magistrates, have a deeper tincture in them than ordinary ones; the self-same offence committed against a prince, and against an inferior person hath its additions of extent and heinousness, according to the person of the prince offended. Now, sin is committed against an infinite majesty, an infinite God, and so hath a more deepness of tincture and filthiness, in proportion to the injury done to such majesty; in that respect, sin indeed becomes an infinite crime; for, still according to the injury done, in respect of the person injured, so is the offence; you know the difference in slanders: slander a poor man, and, it may be, the action will not bear above ten pounds for it; but slander a rich merchant, whose credit goes far, there men lay an action of a thousand pounds for the slander of such a man, in regard of his degree; he being greater, and his credit of greater value, the offence in taking away his credit is so much the more heinous. Now, by how much God is greater than man, by so much is the heinousness

of transgression, committed against God, beyond all other transgressions whatsoever. Now, beloved, that righteousness that must save a person harmless, must have an extent in it, that may reach as far as the transgression does. Take into your consideration the transgression committed against divine majesty; take the active and passive obedience of Christ, as it is acted by his human nature only, it is but a created finite thing; it cannot extend to such a height, as to answer in proportion to the offence of the divine majesty. Beloved, let it not seem strange, that the very godhead itself must confer something of its own, to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, to make it complete. The divine nature gives value and virtue to the obedience and sufferings of the human nature; it adds so much, as to raise up that created obedience to an infinite value and height of worth. All that I contend for, at this time, is but this very thing; namely, that the divine nature must give worth, and that simply the active and passive obedience of the human nature of Christ is not sufficient of itself, without something of God's own be communicated unto it, to discharge a believer from an infinite fault or guilt.

But, what it is that God communicates (more than this, that he gives value to the human righteousness) and how he communicates it, is a secret we know not; but this we are sure of, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ; and that righteousness of God, is the righteousness by which we come to have our discharge from sin. The apostle tells us, in Col. ii. 9, 10, "In him, (speaking of Christ,) dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily; and we are complete in him;" the fulness of the godhead dwells in Christ, and we are complete in that; our completeness consists in, and springs from the fulness of the godhead in Christ, as from its fountain; there is certainly something in it worth our observation, that the Holy Ghost should take notice of a fulness of the godhead in Christ, before he speaks of a completeness which we have in him. Surely it imports, that Christ communicates something that is God's own, unto us; and yet this will not import any essential thing that is wrought in our persons; as if Christ did substantially change our natures into God's nature, or his unto ours, which were a gross absurdity. But there is a communication of an infinite value and virtue to the active and passive obedience of Christ: for the

righteousness that becomes ours, by which we stand complete with God, must have so much value, as I said, as may stand in proportion to the breach of the law of God: now, if there be but a righteousness of Christ's human nature, consisting in his active conformity to the law, and suffering for the breach of it, and we to stand in this righteousness, this will not make us complete: for, mark, he that is complete, by the righteousness of Christ, it must serve for every purpose whatsoever; if there should be some defect, which that, as it is acted by him in his human nature, doth not make up; we could not be complete by it; although that, even as it is human, is absolutely complete in its kind, and without defect. This righteousness of a man consists in a conformity to the will of God revealed, and that in all relations whatsoever, and in all actions of those relations: suppose a magistrate, (besides his common duties he is to perform, as he is a man or a christian) he must perform the duties of his public relation, he must do justice in judgment, and the like. Now, suppose he should be exact in all the common duties, as he is a christian, and should still fail in the duties of this public relation, he is not completely righteous because there is a want of a magistrate's righteousness. Now, what is it that makes this man complete in Christ? it must be the filling up that which is empty in him; there must be that found in Christ's righteousness, that may fill up this defect, or else there cannot be completeness in him: so likewise, if a father, or a mother, fail in the duties of their relation, they must go to Christ for a righteousness, to supply this, and all other defects. Now, where will you find it in Christ? he never was a father, nor a mother; he never performed these several offices requisite to the several relations: he never brought up children; never was a magistrate. When a father fails in the duties of his relation, where can he find out a righteousness fit for him to make it up in Christ? Now, therefore, the divine nature either must add some eminency of worth that must serve in the stead thereof, unto that, which his active and passive obedience, as human, did not particularly effect; or else there cannot be a complete righteousness given by Christ unto him; and therefore, whereas it is objected against the active obedience of Christ; forasmuch as it doth not serve for us, in regard, it is not every way answerable unto the righteousness done by man, therefore there must come a righteousness of

faith instead of that. I say, the remedy is worse than the disease, and my ground is this ; if Christ's active obedience, through non-performance of some particulars required of us, be not a complete righteousness for every circumstance required ; much less faith, wherein, as acted by us, there is both omission of good, and commission of evil, which simply is sin ; whereas the active obedience of Christ could not be charged with the least sin in any kind ; I say, much less can faith fill up this emptiness, being itself sinful ; seeing the active obedience of Christ, being free from the least spot of sin, only through non-performance of these several duties of these several relations, and being but a created righteousness, could not fill it up ; and therefore, I collect from hence, rather that a supply here is from the dignity of the Godhead, which could not be in the active and passive obedience of Christ ; and this shall be in the stead of every particular circumstance, which ought to have been in the perfect accomplishment thereof. So that though we fail in our relations, as of fathers, mothers, and magistrates, and the active obedience of Christ hath not these particulars in it ; yet this is supplied by the eminency of worth of the person, being God himself* ; and it cannot possibly be any otherwise supplied, but by the giving such infinite value and virtue to that which Christ did ; that though he did not every particular circumstance which is wanting in us, yet, notwithstanding, it amounts in value to all particulars which we should have done.

Now, it remaineth that we should only consider wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness consists ; we have considered what that righteousness is ; namely, the active and passive obedience of Christ, made of infinite value, by a supply of worth from the dignity of the person superadded thereunto ; we should now, I say, have considered wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness doth consist.

There are but two ways by which persons may be acquitted in judgment, being charged with any crime ; either by pleading and proving not guilty, or by pleading and proving full satisfaction made, though there be guilt ; either of these two ways are enough to plead out a full discharge.

As for the first way of plea, Christ manages it not, that is, he doth not plead *non factum* ; Christ acknowledges this and that

* Gen. xvii. 1. Rom. xi. 36

person did commit such and such transgression. It this he doth not deny; but the strength of the plea of consists in the latter, that though the fact be done, yet he, by virtue of this righteousness, pleads out a satisfaction, and, by virtue of that, pleads out a full discharge for those that are his members.

SERMON XXXIX.

FAITH THE FRUIT OF UNION.

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, &c.

You have heard from these words; first, an argument to prevail with the people of God to abstain from sinning: "My little children, I write these things to you that you sin not." This is urged as an argument to persuade them, namely, "We have an advocate with the Father." We have considered already the force of this argument, and the nature of it. 1. We have considered what the advocateship of Christ is, namely, to plead for his people's discharge according to the rules of justice and equity. 2. Whose cause it is that Christ pleads. 3. How Christ is qualified for this office of advocateship: he is Christ that is called of God, and furnished by the Lord unto it: and he is Jesus Christ, an effectual and prevailing advocate, that saves every client harmless whose cause he pleads; his name Jesus, is as much as the Saviour of his people from their sins.

We have considered further, that Christ is qualified with righteousness; and herein also the strength of the plea of Christ, or the argument of it; he pleads discharge from sin by virtue of

his own righteousness. Now, because this discharge depends upon this righteousness of his ; we have proposed to your consideration what this is that hath such strength of plea, as to obtain discharge from sin to the members of Christ, after they have committed sin ; we have proposed it, 1. Negatively ; 2. Affirmatively. The righteousness that obtains discharge from sin, is no righteousness of our own ; nothing we do hath prevalency in the court of heaven with God for our discharge ; not our tears, prayers, or fastings, that prevail with God, but the righteousness of Christ only : by the way, a word or two before I go on ; let none think that denying efficacy unto our performances, for the procuring of our discharge from sin, wholly takes away or eclipses these performances, which are the things God himself calleth for at our hand. I am not ignorant, what an aspersion is rather by men collected, than what can be justly raised out of what I have delivered ; as if there should be a slighting and a derogating from the performances that are the business of a christian's conversation ; as if denying efficacy to prevail for discharge, should be the overthrowing of these performances in God's people. You know what is said of fire, " It is a good servant, but a bad master," useful in the hearth, dangerous in the top of a house : I say, the like of all performances whatsoever ; keep them within their due bounds, they are for excellent uses and purposes ; let them break out of their bounds, and they are dangerous : rivers are useful, but when they overflow their banks they drown all ; they are good creatures within their banks, and water is useful and necessary for many purposes, but nothing more dangerous and destructive when it riseth too high. Exalt performances once into the throne of Christ ; give them his peculiar privileges, and they deny him ; keep them in subordination to Christ, they are useful in their kind : prayer, fasting, circumspect walking, and holiness of conversation, so far as they are kept within these bounds, namely, the glorifying of God, the manifestation of thankfulness, and our due obedience to Divine Majesty, doing good to others, and as they are looked upon as the ordinances of God, in the performances of which the Lord will be graciously pleased to meet with his people, and in them make good to them things that are freely given by him before in Christ ; so far they are exceeding useful : as for instance, God calls forth

unto prayer and fasting ; what is the encouragement of men to perform these services ? not a prevalency that these themselves have with God, but because he hath promised, that when his people call he will answer : so for the promise-sake, we are encouraged in expectation that the Lord will be as good as his word, when we meet with him. “ These things will I do (saith the Lord) yet for all this I will be inquired of by the house of Israel.” Observe it well, and in it you shall see the usefulness in seeking God, in any way that he will be sought in ; he saith, *These things will I do* ; he hath bound himself, he cannot alter it, the word is gone out of his mouth : the thing shall come to pass, he will make that good for his own sake ; and *I will be sought unto by the house of Israel ; I will do it, you shall seek me ; and when you seek me, I will make it good.* So when we come to the ordinances, we look to what God hath promised, and engaged himself to make good to us ; and when we are in ordinances, our eye is, or ought to be, upon the promises ; not upon our own performances, and the ordinances, as if these our qualifications, and doing this or that were the procurers of that we desire ; but the procurer of that, is that which moved the Lord to make a promise. As not our righteousness, so faith hath not plea in it to prevail of itself for discharge from sin after commission. Faith improperly is called righteousness of God. Look into Rom. x. 16 ; the apostle expresseth himself thus ; *The righteousness of faith speaks on this wise, &c.* Here, by the *righteousness of faith*, cannot be meant the righteousness of the act of believing, but the righteousness of Christ believed on.

I came to this assertion, that faith hath not such prevalency of plea to discharge from sin ; nay, not so much as to be an instrument to unite a soul unto Christ. I shall desire, beloved, in this case, yet once more to be marked and heeded attentively and spiritually, ingenuously, and candidly. The assertion I delivered was this, and the reason why I deliver it again, I will tell you by-and-bye ; there is, I say, not such a thing as an uniting, cementing, or knitting power in faith, as that it doth or should become the instrument to unite a soul unto Christ : for before such believing, a soul is united unto Christ, and it must be before it doth, or can believe ; I said this of elect persons still, and so carried it along to the end of the discourse : that an

elect person is united unto Christ before he can believe on him*. Something I said before, for the clearing up of this truth, that a soul must be united unto Christ by his own power, before there can be believing on him. But, beloved, whereas we had thought the truth had been cleared up sufficiently, I have found it otherwise; I find that many stick and stumble at this assertion; there must be believing, say some, before there can be union with Christ, and it is believing itself that makes up the first union with him.

Since the last time I spake unto you, I have received (and, I suppose, from an ingenuous spirit, for under such a stile it comes) an objection against this assertion; and, weighing the objection, I find it of weight enough to require an answer. Besides, I find that divers other persons exceedingly stick and stumble at it; and, therefore, I shall desire to clear up this one thing, both by answering such objections that may be made against it, as also by letting you see what dangers necessarily follow upon the contrary. I shall, and do, commend the candidness and ingenuity of those that seek to be informed in things they not yet so clearly understand, while they do it with a spirit, rather seeking satisfaction, than to maintain contention.

The objection proposed is briefly this: Our Saviour very frequently, in the scripture, holds forth believing, under the notion of coming unto him. The inference is this, coming implies, or supposes, a distance between the person and Christ, till there be coming. The effect seems to be, that he that comes to another, is at a distance from him, till he be come. The upshot, or conclusion, is this: If believing be a coming to Christ, then those persons that do thus come by believing, before their believing are at distance from him; and if at distance from him, then there can be no union between Christ and them, till their coming draws them, and makes them nearer, and so that unites them. The ground of this objection is taken out of some portions of

* The dangerous consequences following the contrary notion, are afterwards observed by the Doctor; but this is condemned as an error by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. p. 90, 91, but received and defended by many eminent divines; particularly, the learned and judicious Witsius says, "The elect are united to Christ: 1. In the eternal decree of God. 2. By the union of the eternal compact. 3. By a true and real union, but what on their part is only passive:" and adds, "Since faith is an act flowing from a principle of spiritual life, it is plain, it may be said in a sound sense, that an elect man may be truly and really united to Christ before actual faith." —Animadv. Iren. ch. vi. sect. 1, 2, 3. See more of this in my Doctrine of Eternal Union, &c. p. 23—44.

scripture; divers are objected, and one seems to have some strength with it, and that is in John v. 40; “ You will not come to me, that you might have life.” Whence it is inferred, that there is no life till there be coming, and this coming is believing, and so consequently there can be no union till there be this believing. The argument, indeed, is laid as strong as may be, and peradventure, may seem to have an undeniable strength in it. Now I shall desire and endeavour to answer this objection as candidly as it was made; and, it may be, other objections that may be made, like unto this, shall be answered in this. And, that you may better understand the answer unto it, it shall be in two ways: 1. In respect of the matter of the argument. 2. In respect of the proof of it.

1. In respect of the matter of the argument; the matter of it is this: before coming there must be necessarily a distance, and so consequently no union. For answer to this, beloved, we are to take into consideration what is meant by distance, and then what by coming. If by distance, in this place, be meant disunion, as it seems it is, (because the thing urged in the objection is, that there is not a union) then we shall proceed on accordingly. You know, full well, that coming is but an allegorical expression; and that all coming will not necessarily infer a distance before coming; mark the expression in Heb. vii. 25; “ He is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him;” here is mention made of coming to God, and of Christ’s ability to save them that come. Now, consider this with yourselves; suppose a man hath been a believer many years, and so as long united unto Christ, whether or no doth not such a believer still come to God by Jesus Christ? Certainly men, after they are believers, frequently come unto God; now, doth coming import a distance before it? then there is a distance, even a disunion (for such a distance we are speaking of) between Christ and believers themselves, as oft as ever they come. Observe that in John xvii. 13, where Christ speaks to the Father himself, “ And now, Father, I come to thee;” here Christ comes to the Father. I ask this question, was Christ at a distance, or was he disunited from him before he did come to him? for he saith, *Now I come to thee*; it seems, before this coming Christ was disunited, if the argument be good, that where is coming there is a distance, and this coming makes up a

union that was not before. It seems by this there was no union, but a distance between Christ himself and his Father, till now at this very time that he comes: but Christ himself, in that very same place, testifieth the contrary, saying, "Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." In a word, coming, it seems, must import believing; suppose it be so, must there be distance, or disunion, always before such coming? Then consider this, that believers, even to the end of their days, have occasion, ever and anon, to renew their acts of believing, that is, to renew their act of coming to Christ; for still, take this along with you, that coming and believing are all one, for so saith the objector. Well, be it so, then believers have cause every day and hour to believe afresh, that is, to renew acts of believing; and is there distance or disunion before there be such coming? then it must follow, there must be union and disunion, and union again, and disunion again, and this as frequent as there is the renewing of the acts of faith. But some will say, peradventure, the first act of coming to Christ, or believing, imports disunion; but all after-acts do not import it. To this I answer, mark where the strength of the argument lieth, and you shall plainly see, there is the very same reason for after-believing, as there is for the first act of it: the first act of believing is coming, and are not two, three, or four acts of believing coming too? What coming is there more in one act than in others? If this be a general rule, that believing is coming, and coming argues a distance, and distance must necessarily be before coming; hence it must follow in brief, that it is no solid argument, persons are dis-united, or not united unto Christ, before the act of believing, because believing is a coming unto him: for, you say, and grant, that there may be, and often is, a coming unto Christ by faith, and yet there may be union before such coming.

But now, to come to the texts of scripture, that are brought in for the confirmation of it: "You will not come to me, that you might have life." The strength of the argument, it seems, lies in this; there is no life till there be coming, and coming is for life itself; therefore there is no union till there be a coming by way of believing. In answer to this, and to clear up the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in this text of scripture, we are first to consider, what our Saviour means by coming, and what this life is he speaks of, which they should have in coming to him.

And to begin with the first, what that coming is our Saviour speaks of in this place ; I will not insist upon this, that Christ speaks to opposers, men that contested with him, and to persons with reference unto others : for I verily believe, though our Saviour speaks this to the pharisees, who certainly never should come to him, nor have life by him ; yet his intent was to speak to them to whom the life of Christ did belong, and who should come to him ; let us, therefore, I say, consider what he means by *coming* in this place. In John vi. 44, our Saviour plainly expounds what he means by coming unto him ; “ No man cometh unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” Mark the expression well, and therein you shall perceive what Christ means by first coming unto him ; for, in both places he speaks of first, and not of after, coming. In which words you may perceive the act of first coming to Christ is rather by, and from the Father, than by any activity in the person that comes ; for, coming there, is plainly attributed unto a drawing act of the Father ; so that the first coming to Christ is just like the coming of a froward child to meet the mother ; the child is sullen, and will not stir ; if it be carried, it strives and struggles ; wherefore the father of it is fain to take it up, and, by a kind of force, carry it with an overmastering strength where meat is ; the child comes to his meat, but how ? not by any act of its own, as if he came of himself, but by the power of him that brings it : a coach, we say, comes to town, when it is but drawn : the coach is wholly passive, and the child in coming to meat ; and so every elect person at his first coming to Christ is passive ; his coming is nothing else but the Father’s overmastering and drawing of him unto Christ.

In Jer. xxxi. 18, “ Thou hast chastised me, saith Ephraim, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned.” Ephraim here appropriates the act of his conversion, not to any coming of his own, but only to the Lord himself ; acknowledging, that the work of bringing unto Christ is the work of God’s own doing ; nay, he sheweth, that he himself was so far from coming, that he confesses, that when God took him first in hand to bring him to Christ, he was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. It is true, in common speech, the bullock is said to come unto the yoke, even a bullock unaccustomed ; but how ? by mere force he is brought to it, and

not willingly. Beloved, you must either establish the rotten principle of free-will, that is, a previous principle of a man's own spirit to come to Christ, or you must confess that persons, at their first coming unto him, are merely passive. It is a known principle, we are first acted, or actuated, before we do, or can act; there is not only a weakness simply before calling, but a deadness, and therefore there cannot be coming; and if there be, it is merely passive, and the whole business must be the Father's own drawing. In Psal. cx. 3, the Lord speaks to Christ thus: "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power:" there is no willingness till the overcoming power of Christ comes in to make it, even contrary to the natural will. The sum, then, is briefly this, and so to apply it to the text objected, "You will not come to me, that you might have life;" that is, it hath not pleased the Father to draw you unto me, that you might have life. I cannot conceive how there can be any other sense given to it, but that it is the Father's sole and only power to bring to Christ, that there may be life; or there is no principle of life from Christ, till the Father, by his overmastering power, brings unruly and cross spirits unto him.

But it may be, some will say, though this coming to Christ be the act of the Father's drawing, yet there is an act of believing when he draws.

I answer, it is not possible there should be an act of our believing while the Father is first drawing; mark what believing is, in sum and substance, it is but a yielding to the mind of the Lord revealed; while persons are contradicting, they are not believing, in respect of those things that they contradict: to believe, and to contradict the same thing, is a contradiction; for, to believe, is to sit down satisfied with the thing that is related; as long, therefore, as persons are contradicting, their spirits are cross, and they kick against that which God proposes unto them, so long they believe not. Now, while the Father is drawing, that very drawing is an argument of resisting, and a kind of kicking against that he aims at: for, if there were yielding, submitting, a willing coming on to the truth revealed, what need there any drawing? Men do not draw those things that come of themselves: and therefore, I say, during the Father's first act of drawing, he laying violent hold, as it were, upon the person, there is no act of believing. The truth is this: the Father gives

his elect to Christ his Son; "Thine they were," saith Christ, in John xvii. 6, "and thou gavest them me:" and the Father that gave the elect unto Christ, gives unto Christ also power, both in heaven and in earth, Matt. xxviii. 18; "All power," saith he, "both in heaven and earth, is given me; go and teach all nations:" as much as to say, I give you apostles, and ministers, that follow you, a commission from myself, to preach, and in preaching to convert; and how so? "All power in heaven and earth is mine." So that, beloved, the Lord takes his elect as they are self-willed and untamed, and brings them as such to his Son; and by virtue of all power that is given to him when brought unto him, he himself breaks, tames, and brings them to his own bent. "The Father," saith Christ, "judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." Take notice of it, that now, as Christ is ordained the mediator of the covenant, the Father doth nothing towards or concerning his elect people, but what he doth by his Son; it is the Son doth all; so that all the Father doth is to deliver up elect persons, such as they are, in blood, enemies, and rebellious, to his Son; and the framing of their spirits to his own bent, is the sole work of Christ himself: Christ is become, by the donation of the Father, the life and soul* of every elect person. Now, philosophers observe of the natural soul, that it is the framer of its own body and organs, that so they may be fitted for it to act its own will: so, may I say, it is with Christ; he hath the framing and disposing of the whole man, to bring every thing in him to his own bent: the Father bringing the creature, as he is a stubborn and stiff-necked one, delivers him up to his Son; so that, I say, there is not a previous act wrought by the Father without Christ, or by the Spirit, by which a person comes, and closes with him; but the Father gives that person, without any faith or qualifications whatsoever, to his Son; he frames and creates that very faith in them to come to him; and therefore in Isa. xlii. 6, you shall plainly see, there is not an opening of blind eyes, a giving of believing eyes, to close with Christ before he himself be given, and given as a covenant to them: so saith the text, "I will give thee for a covenant:" here you see Christ passed to persons, not with a supposition, that when they believe, he shall be theirs, and they his, but, "I will give thee for a covenant, to open the blind eyes;" the

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

eyes are not opened before Christ comes, but he comes when the eyes are blind, and when he comes he opens them.

But, to go further, let us suppose, that coming, in this place is spoken of believing; it cannot follow, that though there be no life till believing, therefore there can be no union before: I say, if it could be imagined, that there may not be life from Christ, till believing, yet it follows not, that there must be believing before union; nay, beloved, there is nothing clearer in all the world than this; namely, suppose there cannot be life before there be believing, yet there must be union before there can be life fetched from Christ; for, suppose that the fruit upon a branch should have such a faculty to draw life into the branch from the root, though this would be a strange conceit, whereas the root communicates life to the branch, and the branch, by virtue of that life communicated, brings forth fruit; but yet, suppose the fruit should draw life into the branch from the root; that is, suppose that faith, which is a fruit, growing upon a member of Christ, that is, a believer, and a branch of that body, should have such a faculty to draw life from Christ, the root, into the branch; yet, it is impossible that faith should draw life into the branch, till the branch be united into the stock; for, beloved, that is Christ's comparison; "I am the vine, you are the branches:" now, take this comparison; suppose a branch, growing upon a wild olive, is cut off from it, and for the present is not united to the good olive-tree; can a wild olive—or suppose it to be a good olive upon this branch of the wild tree—can this fruit upon the branch draw life from the root of the good olive-tree, while it is separated and laid aside, and is not united to it, from which root it must draw life? It is known to all men, that communication is the fruit of union; there is no participation, nor communion of any thing that is Christ's, but as it flows from union with him, so that either you must say, that faith, which you speak of, is not of Christ, the root, but hath some other root from whence it hath its being; or else you must confess, if Christ be the root, it must come from him, by virtue of union to him first.

Finally, suppose it should be, that coming is believing, and that this life spoken of here is not in persons till they believe; what is meant by life here? Beloved, I beseech you consider, the apostle tells us, "Our life is hid with Christ in God; and Christ is the life of the world;" that is, of the elect. It seems,

then, that the life of every elect person hath a being in **Christ**, before he believes; believing, therefore, doth not produce a new life that was not before, only it manifests that which was before; and it makes that life, which was before, an active life; or is an instrument by which that life that is hid in Christ, after believing, becomes an active and appearing life in this person. So that all that can be made of it, is but this; till believing, there is no activeness of the life of Christ in the person that is elected; his life is in Christ, and was reserved in him till the time of believing for him; and then doth he, the elect person, become active in life, when Christ gives him to believe actually: but to say that this believing should give the first being of that life in persons, is to say, there is not that life of the elect in Christ, before they believe. In a word, beloved, I shall seriously desire you, that with candidness and ingenuity of spirit, you would take into your consideration, those dangerous consequences that must of necessity follow, if you will receive this for a principle, that there is no justification and union at all belonging unto elect persons, till they actually believe in Christ; if persons are not united unto Christ, and do not partake of justification before they believe, but that believing is the instrument by which they are first united, then mark what will follow upon it.

1. In some respect there will be a bringing to life again the covenant of works. How will that be, will you say? I beseech you consider it well; the apostle will tell you so, as well as I: the Lord told Adam at first, "Do this, and live; if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," saith Christ to the rich man: and the Apostle in Rom. x. 4, 5, tells us of the covenant of works clearly; Moses, saith he, describing the righteousness of the law, saith thus: "He that doth these things, shall even live in them;" mark here, the covenant of works out of these expressions, is this; namely, for persons to do, that they may live: the covenant of grace runs upon contrary terms; men must first live, that they may do: God, in his covenant of grace, gives life first, and from life comes doing; in the covenant of works, there must be first doing for life. But, you will say, how doth this follow out of this conceit that men must believe, before they shall live in Christ? Thus, you must of necessity press upon yourselves these terms, or such like, I must do, that I may have life in Christ; I must believe, there is no life till I do

believe; now, if there must be living first, then there is doing before living; but, it may be, you will say, faith is opposed to works: when it is opposed to works, it is understood objectively, that is, it is understood of Christ believed on, and not of the act itself of believing; for it is certain, beloved, our act of believing is as much our doing, as our acts of love, or others. So that here must first be doing before life be obtained; if persons must first believe, before they have union with Christ.

2. If there must be our act of believing before there be participating in Christ, then mark what will follow, those sins which were once laid upon Christ, and taken away from the elect; for they could not be laid upon him, unless they were taken from them; are, it seems, returned back again upon these believers. whereas they were charged upon Christ; he once paid the full price; upon the payment of this, there was acknowledged full satisfaction, so that those sins were once blotted out: I say, if there must be believing before there be union with, or interest in Christ, it must necessarily follow, that, till such believing, the person of that elect bears his own transgressions, and is chargeable for them that are imputed unto him. But how can it stand with the glory of the redemption of Christ, that he should have all iniquity laid upon him, carrying all iniquity, like the scapegoat, into the land of forgetfulness, whither they were once carried, and they are afresh charged upon this person again. Did Christ bear them away? and did he return them back again? Where did you ever find, that sin once taken and carried away by Christ from the person offending, did return back again upon the person from whom Christ took it away?

3. Suppose this, that men have no interest in Christ till they actually believe in him, then it must follow, that these persons, till they are actually believers, are under the hatred of God; for, if they bear their own transgressions themselves, then God being a jealous God, his holy and pure nature everlastingly hating iniquity, and also the person upon whom iniquity is charged; there must be a hatred of God upon these persons till they believe; and to conceive that God hates these persons, is to conceive that God may love and hate the same person; whereas he saith, in Rom. ix. 13, concerning Jacob, that being yet unborn, *Jacob have I loved*; here you see love is communicated to Jacob, being yet unborn. Now mark, Jacob, when he was

not yet born, was not an actual believer. Well, had Jacob no interest in Christ and the love of God, till such time as he believed? Yea, *he had*; so saith the text. Aye, but yet Jacob, must be hated till he believes, because Jacob, till he believes, must bear his own transgressions; so that here must be, at the same time, upon the same person, both the love and hatred of God, and how can these contraries stand together?

Yet again; suppose persons have no interest in Christ, till **they** actually believe, it must follow from thence necessarily, that there is a believing in such persons before they have union with Christ, and then you must make some other root from whence this believing must spring: as for Christ, it hath nothing to do with him; for he hath nothing, in regard of communicating his grace and Spirit, to do with them; but they are believers, and their believing is that which knits the knot between Christ and them; whence comes this believing? where is the root of it? Is Christ the root? then have they first union with Christ, that they may receive *it* from him; then must they first be united unto him, and made one with him, and live in him, and by virtue of union with him, receive this faith as a fruit of that union. If it proceed from some other root, I beseech you consider how it can be, and how can this be avoided, but that this conceit must needs be exceeding derogatory to Christ, to make another foundation besides Christ; whereas in Heb. xii. 21, it is expressly said, "Christ is the author as well as finisher of faith." Beloved, upon these considerations, for my own part, I have received this principle that I have delivered unto you, and merely the vindication of the glorious privileges which are proper and peculiar unto Christ alone, is the occasion that I refer the being of faith itself unto Christ, and to nothing else in the world, and that I may uphold these particular and glorious prerogatives that are proper to Christ, that he may not be robbed of any of them. To this end, I deliver it to you, that elect persons have a participation and share in Christ himself, even before they believe; and let none conceive that this takes away, or diminisheth from the prerogative of believing neither. For there are glorious things done by faith unto believers; God hath honoured it above all mere creatures in the world; he hath made it the conduit-pipe for the conveyance of all that peace and comfort; nay, of all that strength which believers have all their lives; no faith, no

comfort, no peace of conscience, no pleasure to walk with God: through faith, Christ conveys himself in speaking peace to the soul, in bidding the soul be of good cheer; the soul lies in darkness, while it lies in unbelief. But still that which is proper and peculiar to Christ alone, is not to be ascribed unto believing. I should now proceed, (having as well as I can, taken way the rubs) to that which I purpose to follow. But the time is past.

S E R M O N X L.

CHRIST ALONE OUR MERCY-SEAT

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS; AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, &c.

WE have considered already the office of Christ here spoken of, his advocateship; the cause he manages, and also the persons whose cause it is. The cause he manageth, is in behalf of the sins of his people; and the persons are not present believers, but all elected persons, though yet unbelievers: we further considered the qualifications of Christ unto this office. 1. He is Christ, that is, called of God unto it, and furnished by God for it. 2. He is Jesus, he takes no cause in hand, but he saves his client. 3. He is the righteous; the efficacy of the plea of Christ lieth in this righteousness of his, that being the sole hinge upon which the door turneth. In the large opening of this unto you, I spake, 1. Negatively. The plea that prevails for the discharge of sin, is not our works; no, nor our faith; but it is the righteousness of Christ himself only. 2. Affirmatively: there is an

active righteousness of Christ; for, "by the obedience of on man, many shall be made righteous," Rom. v. 19, and the passive righteousness of Christ; "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7. But it is the divine righteousness, or dignity of the divine godhead that adds an efficacy, and virtue, making the active and passive righteousness of Christ a complete righteousness, that we might be complete in him; and we gave a touch to you, wherein the efficacy of the plea of this righteousness stands; it stands in the satisfaction that righteousness hath made to the justice of God. In judgment there are but two ways to be acquitted, either just proof, that the person upon trial is not guilty; or being guilty, the law is already satisfied. The strength of the plea of the righteousness of Christ, insists not upon the first way; he grants the persons whose cause he pleads, had, for matter of fact, done the thing that is charged; but the strength of it is, that the law on their behalf is satisfied already. This latter plea being good, hath the like force for acquittance and discharge as the former hath; so that the sentence of judgment can no more pass upon the person for whom the law is satisfied, than it can upon persons that never transgressed it.

Now, it remains to be considered, by way of objection out of the premises, how this can be, that the justice of God should be satisfied, seeing this is bringing a recompence to answer in proportion for the offence committed: the ground of the objection is this, all that Christ, as man, brings unto God, comes short to make a recompence. I told you before, that the divine righteousness is that which makes the righteousness complete, and that a mere human righteousness is not able to effect, till it be infinite, or be made infinite by the divine righteousness. Now, when Christ brings a recompence to the Father for the transgressions of his people, that he brings to him, should not be that, which was his own before; now, whatever the divine righteousness is, that is God's own; the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature, is brought to him, but not the divine righteousness. You will say, this is just as one man oweth another an hundred pounds, and he sueth him for it; the debtor, he cannot raise above ten pounds of the money; but the creditor must make it up out of his own purse. So then here is the ground of the objection, and the truth is, this matter contains

in it the depth of the mystery of the gospel; that justice should be satisfied by bringing a recompence for transgression, and yet that, as it is brought, is not so much as will answer the injury that is done of itself. It is true, there is enough in the divine righteousness, to make the satisfaction for the injury done; but how is this divine righteousness brought?

It is most certainly true, where there is satisfaction of justice in this case, there is also mercy; for, though God be just to forgive sins, yet, you shall find, that where the apostle speaks of justice in this act of forgiveness of sins, he speaks of mercy too: you know, to forgive a thing, that is an act of grace and mercy; yet, even while there is forgiveness, justice is manifested, and takes its course. But this, you will say, doth not resolve the question: where can there be a satisfaction of justice, seeing there is not brought, by way of recompence, that which is proportionable to the injury done.

1. Justice is satisfied in the strictest sense, when there is such a plenary and equivalent recompence given, that the person injured thereby, is in a good estate every way as he was before the injury done: when a man is trespassed against, and sues for this trespass, and the man makes up, and brings in as much recompence as the injury cometh to; so that the party trespassed is worth as much as he was before; here is a plenary satisfaction of justice. Now comes in the objection, and says, that the justice of God cannot be said to be satisfied, because the active and passive obedience of Christ, as human, bring not in so much to God as the injury comes to; and what is from the godhead, is God's own before.

2. Therefore some say, that there is a satisfying justice properly, though there be not full recompence, as in every point to answer the injury done; I will but give you a familiar illustration of it, that you may not say, it is an unknown, and an unheard of thing, that justice is satisfied though no plenary recompence in the former sense, for satisfaction, be brought. Suppose one man murder another, an ordinary case; now, for a plenary recompence to the injury done, he that is slain must be *in statu quo prius*, that is, must be made alive again; and till he be restored to life, here is not a complete recompence made. But, how is it possible, that any man that hath committed murder, should make this full recompence to the person that is

injured ? He cannot restore life to him again ; and, yet for all this, though he cannot bring in a full recompence in this way, he may properly satisfy justice ; for, if life answer for life, if the murderer be executed, the law and justice may truly be said to be satisfied. Here then they say, that there may be satisfaction of justice, and yet not the fulness of recompence in the strictest sense brought in. Justice, I say, is satisfied in this respect, because, here is as much brought in by way of recompence, as is possible to be had. You know, beloved, you have a proverb, “ Where there is nothing to be had, the king must lose his right ;” when a man pays all that ever he hath, he can pay no more, he satisfies justice. In this sense justice is said to be satisfied, when the law is satisfied ; and so the satisfying of justice doth not necessarily imply the fulness of recompence in the strictest sense, according to the injury done. How cometh it to pass, when a murderer is executed, that upon his execution only, the law esteems this to be a recompence, and justice to be satisfied, though it does not answer the injury done ; but only as it answers to the law, that is the rule of justice, so it is satisfaction : even so, say they, the justice of God is truly satisfied, when the will and pleasure of God is fully fulfilled, whether or no, there be a bringing in a full and plenary recompence. If the will and pleasure of God be satisfied, concerning transgression, that is the satisfaction of the justice of God. Now, what is the will of God ? It is this, that in the day that man sins, he must die ; either in person, or by deputation ; for among men the satisfaction of the law is made, either in the man’s own person that is the debtor, or his surety that will pay the debt for him. The law in some cases, looks more upon the thing that is brought in to answer to it, than it doth upon the person that brings it. The justice of God looks upon the fulfilling of his will, although it be not by the same person that sinned ; this alters not the nature of the thing, whether I myself pay the debt or another for me, the payment is satisfactory, so in that the will of God hath its utmost bounds for the satisfying of justice, whereas transgression must be recompensed with death. Now, Christ, the surety of his people, going under the punishment, and fulfilling it, the law is satisfied, because every tittle of it is fulfilled, and there is nothing in it remains to be answered. But,

3 I say further, that the satisfaction of Christ is complete, even

in the strictest sense, though it be granted, that the bare sufferings and righteousness of the human nature cannot effect it, without the divine nature, and the righteousness thereof; and, whereas it is urged, that the righteousness of the divine nature is God's own already, it is granted; and that both, because it is essential unto him, and incommunicable to the creature; therefore, and also, for the reasons alleged before, in the objection, it cannot be formally, either the whole, or any part of our righteousness; yet, notwithstanding the divine nature, and so the divine righteousness, by the hypostatical union, fit and furnish Christ to be an all-sufficient Saviour, and satisfier, that thereby the person of Christ is so glorious, that his active and passive obedience is made of infinite worth and value, to give satisfaction for us; and that, in the strictest sense, making a perfect reparation, and of all things in the behalf of the elect, for whom he undertakes, and brings upon them salvation to the uttermost.

In brief, beloved, and so to conclude this business, though there may be some hint given for your better understanding, by way of illustration, how justice may be satisfied, yet the truth is, the fullest resolution wherewith persons ought to sit down without further dispute, is not by argumentation, but by divine faith. Suppose we could not sound the bottom of this principle, that God's justice should be satisfied; yet we may sit down as fully resolved that it is, though you know not how it should, in that the Lord reveals to us, he is satisfied; whose word must be more to us, than all the demonstrations in the world can be by way of argument; that here Christ is said to be the propitiation for our sins; that God himself acknowledges elsewhere, that he is satisfied. What matter is it to me, how he is satisfied? I mean, in respect of resolving me by way of argument, how it is, his own word speaking it, and resolving it to us, that with which we should sit down withal, without any further dispute. If therefore, all this while, you cannot know he is satisfied, your believing upon the testimony of God's word that it is so, may be as full a satisfaction to you; yea, may be, a more full resolution to your spirits, than all the arguments and demonstrations in the world can be.

And, I come in brief, to the last clause of the text; namely, the issue of this advocateship of Christ, in the behalf

of his people when they sin, which is, "He is the propitiation for our sins:" the words contain the conclusion of the plea of Christ, telling us what it comes to at last, that by it he becomes the propitiation for our sins. The main thing to be considered here, that we may understand aright our portion in this grace, is to know what this propitiation meaneth, or what it is for Christ to be a propitiation. Beloved, there is abundance of marrow and fatness in this very word, and, I think, much of it is lost, in respect of sense and comfort, for want of understanding the extent of it; that you may the better therefore dive into the mystery of this propitiation, you must understand, that the word, in the original, *ιλασμος*, is of the same signification with the word the Septuagint translation uses, when they interpret the Hebrew word, that is rendered mercy-seat; *he is our propitiation*, that is, he is our mercy-seat. And if you would know what it is for Christ to be our mercy-seat, look into Lev. xvi. 14, 15, you shall find the main end for which this was erected by the Lord; for, of all those ordinances that the Lord established among the Jews, this mercy-seat was the uppermost. Now, you shall find three things especially appropriated unto the mercy-seat.

1. The sweet incense, that none ought to make upon pain of death, but Aaron alone, must burn upon the golden altar every morning before the mercy-seat.

2. The most notable of all the rites and types of the Jews, was to be prepared before the mercy-seat; the type of the scape-goat with the live goat, as you may find there handled at large. The live goat must be brought before the mercy-seat, and Aaron must lay his hand upon the head of it, and then the scape-goat must be sent into the wilderness, and carry the sins of the people into a land of forgetfulness.

3. At the mercy-seat, as it is in Exod. xxx. 6, the Lord appointed to meet with Moses, and there speak graciously unto him; and there God will hear him speak, and will be heard to speak, and return his gracious answer at the mercy-seat*. Well then, to come to the business in hand, that I may clear it the better; Christ is our mercy-seat, that is, the incense, or the sweet savour that smells with acceptance and delight in the nostrils of the Lord; that which makes a sweet savour in the

* Exod. xxv. 22.

mercy-seat. Incense, had it been burned any where else, but (here according to the appointment and commission of the Lord every morning) the very place itself being changed, would have taken away the savour of the incense before the Lord; therefore, the mercy-seat is that, for which the incense becomes a sweet savour; as much as to say, all our prayers, duties, and services, (notwithstanding our sins, being believers) become as a sweet savour to the Lord, as they are presented up before the mercy-seat by Christ; he is the propitiation then, that is, it is he by whom our persons and performances become a sweet savour to the Lord. Again, the scape-goat, and the live goat to be slain, were to be prepared before the mercy-seat; as much as to say, our sins are carried away into a land of forgetfulness, by virtue of Christ; as the scape-goat being presented before the mercy-seat, was made a type capable to carry away the sins of the people into a land of forgetfulness; so that as we are presented unto God, in and through Christ, our sins are carried by Christ into a land of forgetfulness.

Lastly. Before this mercy-seat the Lord appeared, and at it God will return his gracious answer; as much as to say, in Christ, and through him, the Lord returns all the gracious answers to his people upon earth; not a voice of grace, peace, and comfort is to be heard, but at the mercy-seat: for, mark it well, you shall find God hath made over all that gracious language of heaven unto his Son Christ; and only unto him, there came this voice from heaven when he was baptized, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But upon the mount, the voice was a little more plain; for there it saith, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him;" as much as to say, all the grace I have to speak to men, I have put it into the mouth of Christ my Son, and not a voice is to be expected of grace from me, but as it cometh out of his mouth; there is not a word of comfort to be heard, but as it is spoken from the mercy-seat; so that putting these things together, in respect of the sacrifice of the scape-goat, (the text in Leviticus telling us of an atonement that is made by the presenting of this sacrifice before the mercy-seat). In a word, the sum of all is this: 1. In and through Christ our advocate, we become a sweet savour to the Lord. 2. There is an atonement made with him for us, our sins being carried into a land of forgetfulness.

3. And, in Christ, he speaks all the gracious language of heaven to us. Now, whereas at this mercy-seat, the special thing intimated unto us, is the atonement that is made, it seems that propitiation hath reference in the signification of it, to that; as when a man desires one that is at variance with him to be propitious, that is, would admit of a propitiation or atonement. Now, that you may know what atonement is, and so propitiation likewise, look into Rom. v. 10, 11: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Reconciliation, what is that? Mark what follows; "And not only so, but we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement;" you see he makes a proposition, by way of supposition: *If when we were enemies*, &c. And, in the next words, proves that there is reconciliation, or rather shews the fruits of it being obtained; *We joy*, saith he; in what? in him, by whom we have received the atonement. What is that? Atonement, in this place, is the reconciliation which Christ makes between God and us; so that propitiation indeed, runs at last into this cistern; namely, reconciliation with God; herein lieth the efficacy of the plea of Christ, for his people committing sin: he is the mercy-seat, the propitiation, the atonement, or reconciliation. This is the issue of it; when Christ pleads for the discharge of his people, this pleading produceth reconciliation between God and them. If we could but dive into the mystery of reconciliation between God and us, we should then find the comfort of this office of Christ to be a propitiation for us. Now, if you will know what this reconciliation is, which is indeed an interpretation of propitiation; observe how the apostle illustrates it in Eph. ii. 13: "You that were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Reconciliation is making nigh those, who were sometimes afar off: look into Col. i. 21, 22, the apostle will there tell you, in what respect the members of Christ, the elect, are said to be afar off: "You who were sometimes alienated, and strangers, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works, hath he now reconciled." So then to be afar off, and so afar off to be made nigh, it as much as to say, that persons alienated in respect of enmity in their minds, by wicked works, notwithstanding all that enmity, are made nigh, they are reconciled. You know

well, in respect of men, who are the elect, they are from all eternity in the purpose of God, made nigh by the virtue of the blood of Christ, that in time should be shed ; which virtue is effectual in the eyes and thoughts of God from all eternity ; so that though, in respect of the nature of wicked works, there be a separating and an alienating, yet in regard of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, being in force with God, the persons who are elected, are nigh to him in purpose, from eternity. So that alienation and estrangement, in respect of enmity against God, is not to be understood, as if elect persons were in very deed, and properly, at any time decreed to be separated absolutely from God ; no, he had them in his thoughts, as the objects of his love, from eternity ; and these thoughts of being nigh, were intended to be executed through the blood that was continually in his eye : the apostle's meaning is, you who, so far as you wrought wicked works, had that in you, which in its own nature was the cause of alienation, and could not admit of your being near, till there was reconciliation made ; that is, whereas these wicked works did, in their own nature, actually, and for the present, make you walk at a distance from God, and so, in respect of them, you were afar off, you are now made nigh by the blood of Christ ; Christ hath taken away sin, the cause of that distance between God and you, and also hath revealed himself unto you, being believers ; and in doing this, hath made known to you his eternal council, concerning your reconciliation ; and that now you are actually, and really, in the very bowels of God ; and also he, in some measure, subdues and destroys the power of Satan in those wicked works ; so that now there is more nearness, in conversation with God, after calling and believing, than there was before ; and the blood of Christ is that which makes persons, who were far off, nigh again to God. And this is the reconciliation, namely, whereas there was a distance before, there is now a nearness, and this by the blood of Christ, as by a sacrifice of propitiation. That you may the better understand the nature of reconciliation with God, you must know, that it properly imports, that whereas there is a variance and estrangement, a person is then said to be reconciled when the breach is made up, and the controversy is ended, the quarrel done, and persons become friends again.

You know, as long as there is hitting in the teeth, a secret

grudge, objecting one against another, and prosecuting one another, in respect of injuries done, there is no reconciliation: when men are reconciled, they lay down the bucklers, quarrel and fight no more, but walk as friends together. And if they should walk as friends in outward semblance, and yet bear rancour in their spirits one against another, this were but an hypocritical reconciliation. In reconciliation, the very heart itself is made friends with persons reconciled. All this imports unto us thus much, Christ is become to believers the atonement; one that makes peace with God, ends the controversy and quarrel between God and them; whereas God was injured, and might have prosecuted the violence of the law upon us; Christ brings to pass, that the Lord lays down the buckler, to have no more to say against a person, but to become friends with him. You know, that reconciliation is such a thing as is not only a making friends to-day, but so, that there may be a continuation of this amity. You cannot call this reconciliation when men are brought together, and their controversies are ended now to-day, but upon the same will fall out again to-morrow; here is not reconciliation; for, in reconciliation there must be a burying of all that which was the subject and matter of the quarrel. So Christ being our reconciliation, he making our peace with God, doth not bring God to be friends with us to-day, so as to fall out with us to-morrow again, but to be friends with us for ever. Therefore, by the way, know, that every person reconciled unto God by Christ, is not only a person become a friend of God now, but for ever; and as Christ takes away the present anger of God against him to-day, so all quarrels and controversies for ever; so that a person reconciled shall never have God at controversy any more with him. Some, it may be, conceive Christ reconciles God and us in respect of sins that are past; but if we sin anew, say they, God must have new controversies, and new quarrels. But, beloved, remember this, he bore all iniquity at once upon him; and when he made reconciliation with God, he brought in all the transgressions of believers, from first to last, and so ended the quarrel with God, in respect of every one, even for sins future as well as past. He dealt so with God, that he reconciled him to you in respect of them; so that Christ must either leave out those sins you think breaks peace with God, or, if not, then that reconciliation as much concerns those sins, as other transgressions

already committed. Now, think whether of these be true doctrine, either that Christ should leave some sins out that are brought again into controversy, and so God again begins to fall out with persons for them; or whether he made agreement for all, and all comes into reconciliation. Therefore, I say, suppose two men are at variance, they have a hundred actions one against another; a friend comes in to make up the business between them; he brings in every one of these hundred actions to this agreement; he dealeth so with them, that all the controversy between them, in respect of all these actions, shall die; and so he makes them friends. Now, I ask, when all actions are brought into the agreement, may these men fall to quarrelling and suits of law for any of them? They cannot do it; beloved, if Christ brought in all the transgressions of his people into the agreement, and they were all satisfied for by him, "His blood cleanseth from all sin," as saith the apostle; how cometh it to pass, that God should again fall out, and be at controversy with them, for any of these sins that were in the agreement before in that reconciliation made? Therefore, know for certain, for your everlasting consolation, that there is nothing shall be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ, or make a breach between God and you, who are his people. Every sin which, in its own nature indeed, makes a breach, was taken into the agreement that Christ made with the Father; and if there should be such an objection rising in your hearts, when you have committed a sin, now God is at controversy with me for this, ask your hearts this question; was this sin brought into the agreement of reconciliation, or was it left out? Did God accept of the reconciliation when this transgression was in the agreement? how can he then fall out again for this that was in his thoughts when reconciliation was made? but this may seem to be but discourse only, and therefore take a view of some passages of scripture, whereby you shall see, as clear as the light, that God's reconciliation to believers is one entire and simple act: this being once made, there is no more quarrel and controversy that God should prosecute persons reconciled; look into Dan. ix. 24, there is a time mentioned of making reconciliation; you shall therein see the effects that accompany it made; I have heretofore recited other effects, but not this; "Seventy weeks shall be determined upon thy people and holy city?" for

what? "for the finishing of transgressions, for the making an end of sin, and making reconciliation for iniquity, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness." Observe it well when reconciliation is made, then there is an end of the matter, that bred and fed the controversy and quarrel. When there is a controversy of God against a person, it must spring from his sins; but when a reconciliation is made, there is a finishing and a putting an end to sin; take away the cause, and the effect vanisheth of itself; but observe the text a little more yet, to shew the unchangeableness of this reconciliation, when made, there is, saith he, "brought in everlasting righteousness." Righteousness, as you have heard before, is that which begets, feeds, and preserves peace and reconciliation with God. So then this fountain of righteousness must be drawn dry, before the peace that is made by it can be wasted. How comes it to pass a lamp goeth out, but because the oil is wasted that feeds it? so the righteousness of Christ is the oil that feeds the reconciliation made; either this must be spent, or the lamp of peace cannot go out; but, saith the Holy Ghost, there is brought in upon reconciliation *everlasting righteousness*; so that it is clear, when God reconciles himself to his people, they are reconciled for ever to him. Consider also the excellent expression, Isa. liv. 9, 10. "This is to me, (saith the Lord), as the waters of Noah; for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall go no more over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee any more; the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." The very express words shew the excellent qualities of that reconciliation that is produced by the bringing in of a better covenant there spoken of.* Mark it well, I beseech you, for there are admirable expressions in it: the thing God proclaims is this, that he will not be wroth, and fall out any more with his people; and this he confirms by an oath, and what can be more binding than the oath of God?

* The meaning is, that God's dispensations towards his people, at the time the prophecy refers to, is like that of his to Noah and his family, and the love he bears to them is like that which he bare to him; and the covenant he has made with them is as that he made with him. The love of God to his people is an everlasting love; it always continues; it never did, nor never will depart, notwithstanding their fall in Adam, their depraved state by nature, their actual sins and transgressions, their many revoltings and backslidings; though the Lord may hide his face from them, and afflict them, still he loves them; whatever departs from thee, his kindness shall not.

Again, take notice of the continuance of this ; how long will not he be wroth nor rebuke ? Even so long as floods shall cease to drown the world. God hath sworn, that till the world shall be drowned with water again, he will not be wroth with his people. As long as water shall not come upon the earth, nay longer, if longer may be ; “ The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee ;” as much as to say, the loving kindness of God shall remain steadfast to the people reconciled to him, even longer than the mountains shall stand fast, and the hills unremoved ; this, I say, is established by such a firm covenant and oath, and out of the mouth of so glorious a God, that the hearts of his people may be secure that he will not be wroth with them.

But, whereas some may say, the Lord, in verse 7, says, “ In a little wrath have I hid my face for a moment ;” therefore, it seems, it is not to be taken for such a perpetual forbearance of wrath.

Consider, that all along this chapter, the prophet speaks of the church of God, in a two-fold estate : he speaks to it one while as it is a wife of youth, and another while as her breasts are grown ; as a wife of youth, so the Lord for a moment hid his face ; but as a wife that is grown up, so he will not be wroth with her, nor rebuke her any more. The apostle Paul most excellently expounds this different estate of the church, in the time before and after Christ, in Gal. iv. 1—4. “ There was, (saith he,) a time of minority, wherein, even an heir, being but a child, differeth nothing at all, in respect of outward carriage, from a servant, though even then he be Lord of all ;” and this time of being a servant, is not for ever, saith the apostle, “ but till the time appointed of the Father.” Here, in respect of outward usage, during this minority, there is no difference between such a person, and him that is not an heir at all, but he is under tutors and governors ; that is, he feels alike the rod, and still this is till the time appointed of the Father : see how the apostle expounds the words, even so *we*, saith he, “ while *we* were children in our nonage, were in bondage under the elements of the world :” we did partake of the common calamities of the world, but how long was this ? “ When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption

of sons." There was a redemption, even in the minority of the church; when it was at the youngest age, there was redemption, but not in respect of that which he speaks of here; that was a redemption from that condition, wherein the heir did not differ from a servant; therefore, most properly, according to the coherence of the words, the redemption, spoken of here, was from a condition wherein they did not differ from servants, into a condition wherein they should differ. So in Isaiah liv. 8, there is such a difference in this two-fold estate of the church, as is between a wife of youth, and a wife grown up: what is that, you will say? You know, even among men, they marry children intentionally when they are but two or three years of age; the child is in some sense a married wife, and yet, for all this, while she is four or five, yea, six or seven years of age, she is used as one that is not married; there is no difference between this child, and one that is not married; but when she cometh to riper years of age, and hath the actual fruition of her husband, then she cometh to be freed from the rod, and receiveth all the immunities and privileges of a wife, which she, though a wife, did not enjoy before: and so in this text, the church as a child under age, and a wife of youth, is visited for a moment, and there is a kind of hiding the face of God while she is as the wife of youth; but when the time of riper age is come, then "this shall be as the waters of Noah to me; as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more drown the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Thus, beloved, you see that God, once reconciled, never falls out with his people any more. It is true, indeed, he chastises them, but he never doth it in wrath and fury. In Isaiah xxvii. 4, speaking of his church, that he would watch night and day, he saith, "Fury is not in me:" he hath no acquaintance with fury, in reference unto such persons: and, therefore, although it be true there may be afflictions, and those exceeding tart to the flesh, even when a person or church is grown up; yet there is not wrath in these afflictions: "Every son, (saith God,) I love, I rebuke and chasten:" there is love even in chastisements, and the fruit of it is love, to take away sin. The end why God sends these afflictions, is not in wrath for sin, but to purge them from the filth. God takes occasion, when his people sin, to chastise them in love; but that chastisement is no fruit of the wrath and curse of God, nor

sentence of the law, but the tender compassions of a loving Father that makes use of them for his children's good : There is as much reconciliation with God under the rod, as when not under it : a father may love a child as dearly when he corrects him, as when he gives him plumbs. It is thus with God, to children reconciled to him, as he corrects a child committing a fault, he never whips him but there is fear he will commit it again ; and therefore he chastises him to prevent a fault ; he doth not punish him to pacify his anger for a fault committed. So God, in respect of the church, for the purging of it, and for trial in these respects, will chastise, and in chastising will convey the spirit of amendment to them : but, in respect of what is done, were it not to have them purged for the future, he would never afflict his people for that which is past : so that, I say, though this be the great objection that troubles men's spirits, they fall daily into afflictions, here is wrath and enmity ; reconciliation is not firm ; God is now fallen out ; yet beloved, know, that God is not fallen out with his people when he chastiseth them. No man under heaven can suffer under afflictions, more than Christ himself did ; yet, saith God, he is my beloved Son, not my hated Son, but my beloved Son, I afflict. It is true, indeed, as the apostle Paul speaks, " No affliction is joyous, but grievous ;" yet, " afterwards it bringeth forth the comfortable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised therewith." Consider this one thing ; can God pour wrath when he only intends the good of his people, to purge and bring them as gold out of the fire ? Certainly, what David had experience of, shall be the fruit of all the afflictions of all the members of Christ, though they be never so many and great ; " Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." Whereupon he saith, that it was good for him he was afflicted. God afflicts to teach, to draw home, to refine and purge. You know, the merchant doth not in wrath fling away his gold, when he puts it into the refining pot ; it is no argument of less love, only he would have his gold tried and refined, and the dross taken away out of it : it is so with God ; all the members of Christ, all for whom he prayed and hath prevailed for with the Father, are the beloved of the Father, and the darlings of his soul ; for his love neither ceaseth, nor diminisheth when they are under the rod.

One word of application, and so I shall have done. Is it so,

that Christ is such an advocate, that having such a strength of plea in his righteousness, he produceth such a good issue, as to bring, at the last, reconciliation? In a word then, you know what to trust unto for your soul's discharge and comfort: "In many things we sin all;" what should uphold your spirits that your sins should not sink your souls? Here is held out unto you that great supporter, the righteousness of Christ, Isaiah xli. 10, "Fear not, be not discouraged," and why? the close of all is this, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness:" if you go any where else for support, when sin is committed, your sins will sink you and swallow you up; nothing can bear you up, in respect of the weight of sin, but the right hand of his righteousness; that alone is the thing that must uphold your spirits, or nothing at all can do it. Oh that the Lord would be pleased to work upon your spirits to betake yourselves to this support, and to fix your spirits upon the fulness of support and strength, that is in this righteousness of his. When the Israelites were stung by the fiery serpents, it was not the applying of a plaister could heal them, nothing but the brazen serpent. Oh, look upon the brazen serpent, the Lord Jesus; look not upon any other plaister in the world but him, to heal your wounded souls stung with the serpent of your sins; though they may serve for other uses, yet they have not so much virtue in them, as to heal the sting of sin: fix your eyes here, cast yourselves here, rest here, let the weight of your souls lean here; "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned: he that believeth shall be established; he that believeth not, shall not be established." Oh, go not to Christ, as if there were not enough in him to answer your transgressions; that you must carry something else with you to him, that may be a help to your discharge; if ever discharge from heaven come unto your spirits, it is only the hand of Christ, by his Spirit, that must bring it down to you; and nothing in the world can do it, but that discharge, as it is recorded in the word of grace. In things that come by relation unto men, and so are opened unto them, how can men be satisfied concerning the truth of the thing reported, but upon the credit of him that is the reporter thereof? Let a man tell me ever so good news, if I do not believe him, my spirit is not satisfied. So, concerning the discharge from sin, you hear it related from heaven; "We

have an advocate, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Now, there is no way in the world to know that there is such a thing as an advocate and propitiation, but as it is revealed from heaven. The apostle John, indeed, reveals it here; if he had delivered it merely as he is man, so it had occasioned suspicion and doubting; but as it is the revelation of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ himself by the apostle, so we are to stick close unto it, and we shall find rest unto our souls, as we can credit the report of it; therefore, as the Lord will work upon your spirits, take up your rest where it is to be found; so your souls shall lie down in peace and safety; you shall sing and leap for joy; and you shall have all peace and joy in believing. O that men would keep up the dying language of a martyr, *None but Christ, none but Christ*, in matters of faith, and stability of spirit, of peace of conscience, as well as of salvation. And so I shall commend this word to the grace of God, in respect of the issue thereof upon your spirits.

SERMON XLI.

THE LOVELINESS OF CHRIST'S BELOVED.

SOLOMON'S SONG, iv. 7.

THOU ART ALL FAIR, MY LOVE, AND THERE IS NO SPOT IN THEE.

THE gospel of Christ being the great and invaluable treasure of the church; the *Helena* for which it should contend; yea, its sanctuary and refuge; it hath pleased the Holy Ghost, to present and hold forth this in change of raiment, as I may so speak; sometimes presenting it, as it were, in a cloud, more darkly by visions and dreams, when deep sleep was fallen upon God's people. Thus the Lord, in former ages, frequently held

out the gospel, especially in that notable example of Jacob, who, while he slept, had it preached unto him in the vision of a ladder, that reached from earth to heaven, by which angels ascended and descended; which ladder was nothing else but Christ, by whom alone the sons of men rise from the lowest condition of sin and misery, to the highest of grace and glory. Sometimes the gospel was brought forth to the church with a mask upon its face, in hard riddles, and dark sentences, to exercise the wits of God's people; and thus, among other times, the gospel was presented unto Sampson. You know the riddle that was put forth, occasioned by a lion slain by him, which, being dead, there was a stock of honey in it, which represented unto his thoughts, the admirable benefit and privilege of the preaching of the gospel; "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came sweetness." It was nothing else but this; Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, by death had a stock of honey, not only nourishing, but sweet to the eater. Sometimes again the gospel was presented, though not with so dark masks, yet with a veil over the face of it, that though some beauty of it might be seen, yet in respect to the glory of it, in an obscure way; and thus it was exhibited unto the Jews in types and shadows, and held forth in their sacrifices, temples, tabernacles, altars, mercy-seat, incense, and the like; in all of which there was a general darkness; namely, a putting over the face of Moses a veil, who in that represented Christ the mediator, as he was to be exhibited unto the people in those times; and yet, although for royalty and honour's sake, the gospel was veiled; sometimes the Holy Ghost is pleased to lift up the veil for a moment, as it were, that there might some glance of the beauty of it appear; even in those times, now and then a prophet would out with some admirable expression of the gospel; but this was but as the breaking forth of light in a dark night. Sometimes again, the gospel was presented in a prophetic habit, and so it was held out, as it were at a remote distance, that even an elevated and supernatural eye had as much as it could do to see it in proportion; and this was the dispensation of the gospel in the prophets. Sometimes also, it was presented under a parabolic habit; and thus it pleased our Saviour to exhibit it in his time, delighting much to see it in this dress; insomuch, that all the gospel he spake, almost, was clothed in it; and so

the kingdom of heaven was likened unto leaven, hid in three measures of meal, and to mustard-seed, and treasure hid in a field; and so he goeth on, setting of it forth under all sorts of comparisons to illustrate it. Finally, the gospel is presented sometimes without either veil or mask over it, in its own proper beauty, shining forth from the face of it, nothing at all hindering the prospect of it, in its own proportion; and thus was the gospel presented unto the disciples, when they said unto Christ, "Now thou speakest unto us plainly, and not by parables." Unto us that live now, at this present, the gospel of Christ is represented in all these varieties of dresses together, to administer the more delight. It is accounted one of the greatest pieces of honour in a state, for a prince to have changes of raiment every day; now, the Lord will put so much state upon his gospel, that it shall not always go in one dress, or habit.

The text that I have read unto you, holds out the gospel in Christ's own way, which was so much affected by him, I mean in a parabolic habit. The most glorious excellencies of the gospel, as it pertains to the church of God, are comprised in this text: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." This, as the whole song, throughout, is nothing less but an elevated strain of discourse between Christ and his church, or a song tuned to the highest note that ever was sung; which discourse is an interchangeable speech between them; the church acting her part first, in ch. i. 2: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" being amiable, sweet discourse indeed: then she falls upon the high commendation of his love, exalting the praise of her husband Christ above the sky; which kindled such a strong affection in her, that she seemed to be far from him, not near enough unto him; she called unto him therefore, that he would draw her nearer unto him: "Draw me, and we will run after thee;" and that she may come the nearer, she begs of him, to tell her where she may find him in a nearer communion with him, than yet she had. Hereupon, her part being ended, Christ begins to tune his note in a higher strain, in answering the church, than she did: "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest amongst women," saith he; here, after his commendation of her, he directs her where she may meet with him; by the footsteps of the flocks; by the tents of the shepherds. And, then he falls again upon exalting and commending her

excellent perfections, by many and several comparisons: the church, by and by, in verse 16, retorts the commendation he gives her upon him again; "My beloved is fair; behold, my beloved, thou art fair, yea, pleasant." Thus, you see, here is a making forth of the praises of each other's excellency, and of the high esteem each hath of the other, in their mutual discourse: Christ saith of the church, "Thou art the fairest among women;" she replies again, "Behold thou art fair;" and thus they go on in admirable expressions of the praises of each other. It would be too large to run over all the particulars of the sweet discourse between them. In the text, Christ retorts the commendation back again unto the church, before she had given him: she having begun to fall into the high commendation of her love, he follows; she retorts it upon him, Christ will not have it rest there; he will have the last word, as I may say; he retorts it back again to her, saying, in these words, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee:" so that here is an out-vying, as it were, between Christ and his church, which should mount highest in the praise of each other, extolling the excellency of each other unto the skies; the burden of the song being this still; "Thou art fair; thou art all fair, my love." In it you may observe in general, the high commendation that Christ gives of and to his church, in which you may note,

1. The most gracious amiable title that Christ gives unto her, he calls her love, the sweetest title a husband can give a wife; but there is an addition of one article, that mightily advances the endearedness of Christ, in respect of the speciality thereof; namely, "My love; thou art all fair, my love."

2. The matter of the praise, and commendation, that Christ gives to his church, it is expressed in that which is accounted most desirable, *fairness*; *thou art fair*; but in this, there is a double addition that exceeds the praise the church gives unto Christ before; the church is not only fair, but *all fair*.

3. For the further illustration of this beauty, there is second addition; "Thou hast no spot in thee."

4. The time of which Christ speaks: every man receives this principle, that in heaven, there shall be perfection of beauty, in which the church shall stand. But if Christ had spoken of the state of glory, he would have declared himself in the future

tense. *Thou shalt be all fair, my love.* But it is observable, he speaks here in the present tense, of the present time of the church, as he hath communion with her here in this world; *Thou art all fair.* There is a great deal of difference; it is one thing to say of a man, thou shalt be rich, and another thing to say, thou art rich. It is true, the church shall be all fair in glory, and it is as true, the church is all fair now: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." That these words are the language of Christ unto his church, may appear to you, if you will consider, what is spoken before; there is the recommendation of the breasts; now, this hath reference to the spouse; but most plainly it appears in the words that follow, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse," saith Christ; either they must be the words of Christ to the church, or of the church to Christ; but they cannot be the words of the church to Christ, for she doth not call him spouse; for the word spouse, is spoken in reference to the woman, and not the man. You shall have it further cleared in the contents of the chapter, which shew the drift of the whole; the author of them holds forth according to the Hebrew, where the genders are more distinct than in our English; that these very words are the expressions of Christ unto his church. Whereby you see, that this is no new doctrine, neither is it set forth by any obscure person, being delivered by Solomon, or rather by Christ, personated by Solomon, that the church should be all fair, and without spot.

The proposition is briefly this, that the love of Christ is all fair, and without spot. You may remember, beloved, that I have hitherto at large endeavoured to set forth the gospel of our blessed Saviour to you, in the first great part thereof (the gospel consisting principally in two things, the negative and affirmative privileges of the members of Christ, their great privilege and invaluable benefit being, 1. Exemption from evil; and 2. A participating of all good things). All the discourse I have had with you hitherto, hath had reference principally to the former branch of the gospel, setting forth to you the gracious discharge of the members of Christ from all iniquity; and so consequently from all the fruits of iniquity, in these words; "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and I have further shewed you, how the people of God, and members of Christ, partake of such discharge as this is, which is the way of God, b

which the sons of men, believers, can have their portion, and their possession of this immunity, and that out of 1 John ii. 1; "If any man sin," &c.

It was in my thoughts, beloved, to have made present progress into the text that I have read unto you; but yet in some respect a necessity lies upon me to give you a brief touch of some things I have formerly delivered, by way of acquitting myself from injurious slanders. It is, and hath been my portion, and I know, not unknown to many of you, that while I have laboured freely, and by the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord, to make known his mind to the comfort and rest of the weary and heavy laden, I myself have not wanted my burthen; yet were it not for the gospel's sake, lest that should receive prejudice, I should never open my mouth to vindicate a truth, as it concerns myself, in so public a way. But as there hath been most false imputations laid upon me, in respect of the gospel, so for the sake of that only, I shall acquit myself publicly before you of such things as are most injuriously charged upon me. 1. It hath been affirmed, and that by persons who have gone for men of credit (and consequently the wound must strike the deeper, and the report take the greater impression), it hath been given forth, I say, that in my discourse among you, I should deliver to you, that the active and passive obedience of Christ, considered as *Θεανθρωπος*, as God and man, in reference to both his natures, hath not a sufficiency in it to make up a complete righteousness for us; and further, that the ground of it should be this, namely, that Christ did not perform the several duties of the several relations wherein many persons stand; as the office of a magistrate, and the relation of a husband, &c. For the vindicating of myself herein, I shall repeat the matter I delivered before, and you shall also know the truth of what my judgment is in this thing, and then leave it to the church of God, whether it be a slander or no. This I then said, that the active and passive obedience of Christ properly, are the actions and passions of the human nature; for the Divine Nature is not subject to obedience, because there is not any superior whom it should obey, neither is it subject to passion; God cannot suffer; and therefore doing the commands, and suffering the punishments, are more proper to the human nature; and this is but a mere creature, and therefore the actions of it, as a creature, cannot extend to a proportion answerable to

the injury done by sin to God : for this cause, I say, as I said before, there must be an addition of virtue from the divine nature of Christ to make the active and passive obedience of the human nature a complete righteousness. So that all I said is this, that the actions and passions of the human nature are not sufficient to make up our righteousness complete, but there must be something of the divine nature superadded, to raise up one proportionable to the transgressions we commit. And that expression concerning the not performing of duties of these several relations, was only to this purpose, to shew wherein the human nature of Christ in obedience, did not fulfil every thing in particular, which is the duty of a man ; and that therefore the divine nature of Christ, by the eminent dignity thereof, is, as I said before, to make up the righteousness a complete one. Concerning this, whether it be truth or no, let the church judge, according to the word : as for *Θεανθρωπος*, Christ, as God and man, it is well known, I used not the word, neither had I the thing in my mind, nor in my tongue, to the purpose they allege it against me : in a word, this, I say, that Christ, as God and man, hath in himself an absolute completeness of righteousness for all the elect ; there need not be a going forth from Christ to any thing in the world besides for a perfect righteousness.

2. There is another charge, deep indeed, and I appeal to you, that have frequently heard me, whether ever you have heard any such thing from me, namely, that by way of inference I should deny Christ ; how true this is, let the whole course of my ministry witness, which altogether aimed and endeavoured the exalting of him above all the creatures in the world ; and, except my being so busy with this truth, become an occasion of so manifest slanders and false aspersions that are raised, I know not what should be the cause of them. But, beloved, how is it that I should deny Christ ? in that, say they, I deny repentance unto life. Now, whether ever I did so, I appeal to you that heard me ; this, I say, concerning faith and repentance unto life, in brief, that neither have any efficacy of their own to produce life ; but those that attain to life, in time the Lord giveth them to believe and to repent indeed. But, 3. Another charge is more strange than all the rest ; this I must touch also. I will name no persons, nor hint them ; my scope is to deliver plainly unto you the truth of my own thoughts, and so lie under censure, or be acquitted. The

charge is this, that I should affirm, that should an elect person live and die a whoremonger and an adulterer, and in all kind of prophaneness; and, though thus living and dying, shall be saved; which, how contrary it is unto the whole course of my ministry, ye are witness; I dare be bold to say, you all know it to be a gross, notorious, and groundless slander. You know, a person being elect, it is impossible he should miscarry, and not be saved. Either God's election must be frustrated, which is impossible, or he that is elected to salvation must attain unto it. I think none of those that have cast this imputation upon me will deny it; but withal, this I said before, and so I say still, there is no elect person, suppose him to be capable, and come to years, shall die before he be called; that is, before the Lord gives faith to him to believe, and in some measure frame him to walk by the Spirit according to his rule; in a word, this person is changed in conversation: the principle is this; "He that believeth shall be saved;" and, "He that believeth not shall be damned:" and, "No unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven:" every soul, therefore, being elected, as it shall be saved at last, so is it, or shall in time be, called and enabled to believe and walk as a child of light. If this be not true doctrine, then I desire my mouth may be stopped.

Having thus endeavoured to take off those aspersions, though not in respect of myself, yet in respect of some of you, who, peradventure, may receive such things for truth, especially coming out of the mouths of such persons, as those from whom the charge comes; I come to the text I have taken to handle, namely, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." I shall say but little concerning the latter branch of it, it having been all my work heretofore to set forth this immunity we have by the blood of Christ, the cleansing from all sin: I shall keep myself to the former branch, "Thou art all fair, my love." Let us therefore take into consideration these particulars, that will give some hint of the grace revealed here. 1. Who this *love* is, of whom Christ speaks. 2. Why this person that is so fair, is here called *my love*. 3. What this *fairness* is that is appropriated to her. 4. What it is for her to be *all fair*. 5. When this time is that she is all fair: "Thou art all fair, my love."

1. Who this is that is called the *love* of Christ: the next words will unriddle the question, "Come with me from Lebanon,

my spouse ;” the love of Christ then here, is the spouse of Christ ; and, beloved, if you knew all, you would soon see what glorious, unspeakable, and unsearchable excellencies are contained in this grace, that the church should be admitted into the bosom of Christ to be his very spouse : there are two things very considerable by which you may perceive, at the least, some of the glory and excellency of this privilege. 1. If you consider the inequality of the persons that are matched. 2. The great privilege that issues from such a match. The word *spouse*, you know, is nothing else but a title of relation, in reference to a husband : now, I say, first consider the inequality of the persons matched, and therein you shall see admirable condescending grace. I remember, in 1 Sam. xviii. 23, when the servants of Saul came to David, to make mention of Saul’s mind concerning his marrying his daughter, David was in a kind of astonishment ; and when they spake to him of the matter, he replied, “ Seemeth it a light thing unto you, to be the king’s son-in-law, seeing I am but a poor man, and lighty esteemed ? ” This was strange news to poor David ; what, presently to marry the king’s daughter, and be the son-in-law to a king, being a poor man as I am, is this a small matter in your eyes ? Much more may we be astonished, that we, poor miserable wretches, should marry the Son and Heir of the world, nay, the Son and Heir of Glory. Shall this seem a light matter to you to be the spouse of a king, to be the sons and daughters of a king of kings ? It was an admirable witty expression of Abigail in 1 Sam. xxv. 41, when David sent messengers unto her, to commune with her, to take her to be his wife, she in humility replied to the messengers thus, “ Let thy handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord ; ” a high strained compliment, if it had been a mere one ; but as it was real, so it expresses the great distance she conceived there was between herself and David ; and therefore doth not spare to shew her thoughts of her great unworthiness to be matched with him ; this is an office good enough for me, to wash the servants’ feet, and not to lie in the bosom of David ; why, what a great matter was this ? she was as rich as David ; and she was very beautiful, and her stock and parentage was as good as David’s ; there was but this difference, a kingdom was promised to David, and he was anointed king, but yet for the present a persecuted anointed ; but notwithstanding she admires

the great condescending of David, that he should take her to be his wife. Oh then, beloved, what must be the condescending of the Son of God, the heir of the world, and the express image of the Father, and the brightness of his glory, as you have it in Heb. i. 3, to stoop to match himself to a creature; surely, I say, it were a great condescending. But since he was so pleased to condescend so low as to match himself to a creature, he might well have chosen the highest lineage and most noble stock of creatures, he might have matched himself with angels, but this makes his condescension more admirable; he descended lower, he took not upon him, saith the apostle, the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. And, beloved, were it to creatures, and the lowest simply, the condescension had not been so great: there may be some beauty in a country maid, though homely attired, as well as there may be in a great personage in richest apparel, of great stock and portion. Had there been beauty, though there had been no lineage, nor noble blood, this were something; but as the blood became ignoble, and traiterous, in respect of the first father's rebellions and treasons, so this traiterous blood could **not** contain itself within its bounds; but as the prophet Isaiah speaks, ch. i. 6, "From the crown of the head, to the sole of the feet, there is nothing else but wounds, and putrefying sores, and loathsomeness in blood; even such, as that person is cast out to the loathing of its person, that no eye could pity;" that Christ should take such a nasty beggar, such a beggar, as stinks above ground as we may well say, in regard of its filthiness; that hath no sound part, being full of blotches, and sores, and putrefactions, running over all parts, from head to foot; I say, that Christ should take such a creature, and make it comely through his comeliness put upon it, and no place should serve it, but heaven where he himself is; and no communication, but the nearest that possible may, or can be imagined; even a communion that extends itself to a kind of oneness, and highest degree of unity. Oh, the astonishing greatness of the love of Christ! They are said to be one flesh, as Christ and his church are set forth by the Holy Ghost, in the union between man and wife; so that, beloved, the church, as she is the spouse of Christ, is made one flesh with him. You have some monstrous births in the world sometimes, that have had some deformed parts growing unto them; as you may see at this time, in some place about this town; a young man with

another youth, as I may say, united to him at his belly ; whereby he is exceedingly deformed, and very much troubled with the burthen of it, and almost poisoned with the noisomeness of it ; whereby, the life of him that bears it, becomes worse than death to him. Beloved, such were some of us ; nay, such were all of us, by nature ; when Christ first took us, we were such monsters, filthy, loathsome, and ugly. And, though we were thus by nature, yet Christ has admitted us, not only into his house, and now and then into his presence, but to sit continually before him ; yea, to be his spouse ; he makes “ us flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone ;” what a condescending is this ; It is true, beloved, Christ covenants, and accordingly he hath done this, namely, cleansed this person, after he coupled himself to it : but, I say, to take persons before this change, in such a loathsome, filthy condition, and make them one with himself, is so strange a condescending, that all the world is not able to parallel it, shall I say ? no, not come near this act of Christ : a king may, peradventure, fancy some worthiness, beauty, something or other, that may be pleasing to him in a beggar, and marry her, that he fancieth to be of worth, and delight in her ; but, beloved, how could Christ cast his love on such persons, whom he knew were such filthy ones ; who, even when he came in the sweetest and fairest ways to woo, spit poison in his face, being full of enmity, stubbornness, and rebellion, even bitter enmity against him ; flinging from him, as the greatest enemy in the world ? Beloved, by nature, every person, till Christ himself tame him, hath a spite against him, and fights against him, and is so full of malignity against him, as to cast dirt even in his face ; and yet for all this inequality and disproportion between Christ and him, he makes this loathsome, wretched person, this rebel and traitor, his spouse.

Now, beloved, if the Lord will but open your spirits to look into this inequality, and see not only the distance, but even the extreme contrariety between Christ, considered as he is in himself, and you in yourselves, how can you but break forth into admiration, even to astonishment ? It is a notable expression in 1 John iii. 1, “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ? now we are the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” John begins with this note of admiration, *Behold*,

and follows it with an interrogation, as not being able to answer it himself, "What manner of love is this?" Why wherein expressed? "That we should be called the sons of God." This is a great love, and yet ye know, that sonship is a relation below a spouse: how then should we break forth, if it were possible, into a higher admiration than ever he did, and say: "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we, poor miserable creatures, should be called the spouse of Christ! Now, we are the spouse of Christ: yet, it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

2. It remains to consider, the privileges of this relation, and therein see the great loving kindness, and unsearchable goodness of our God, that is pleased to match his own Son unto us, and by such a match, to make us partakers of such glorious privileges and immunities. I will but name them: 1. As we are the spouse of Christ, so we are the children of God; he that marrieth the king's daughter, becometh the king's son by that match; but, that is not all. 2. By this match, we become heirs; if sons, then heirs, heirs of glory, joint-heirs with Christ; a great privilege, if you consider all the wealth and riches you have by Christ. 3. This relation entitles the spouse of Christ, to all that ever he hath; to all his honours, and all his communicable titles. 4. It secures the church, the spouse of Christ, from all arrest, from actions, and all suits; let the debts be never so great, the creditors cannot come near her for one farthing: the consideration of this will add also to the exalting and magnifying of the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ to men, to shew what a blessed condition this spouseship is, to those that are strangers unto both; hearing the love of the church, to be the chiefest of ten thousands, may, by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, be won to seek after him; it was the very same case in the Canticles; the daughters of the world say unto the spouse of Christ, hearing her so extol her love, "What is thy beloved more than other beloveds, that thou so chargest us?" Oh, saith the church, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousands;" when they had heard of the excellencies of Christ, they began at last to have their affections taken too, and to say, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" Even so it may please God, when by my endeavour, the excellencies of the privileges of the spouse of Christ are set forth, and the gloriousness of the privileges of the gospel

manifested; I say, when these appear, and when Christ, as the chief of ten thousands, is declared; some may seek after him. yea, and embrace him with joy. But, I cannot stand now to speak of them; but hereafter, God willing, if I should have further opportunity.

S E R M O N X L I I .

CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

COLOSSIANS i. 18.

AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; WHO IS THE BEGINNING.

THE apostle, after the superscription and direction of this epistle, wherein he makes mention of his commission, for the exercise of his apostolic office; and after his apostolic benediction, comes to give an account of the cause of the writing of it. It was this; namely, he had received comfortable intelligence and information from Epaphroditus, a minister of the gospel, that had laboured among these Colossians, of their receiving the faith, and of their love to the brethren. This was glad news to the apostle; and therefore he tells them, that he was not unmindful, or backward, to return thanks and praise to the Lord, for so good a work begun in them, and for the joy he had received by it; and also to pray for them, making mention of many particulars he sought of God, on their behalf; namely, “That they may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;” closing up in thankfulness, verse 13, in remembrance and rehearsal of the fountain and rise from whence all that grace and goodness received, flowed and sprung, and that is the dear Son of God. Having

thus let himself into his own way, namely, the mentioning of the dear Son of God; he takes the opportunity, from an apt connection, to go on according to the main discourse of this epistle, wherein he first sorts his materials, and then falls upon his business. The two main matters he is upon are, 1. The foundation, and that is the Son of God, expressed verse 13. 2. The structure raised upon this foundation, and that is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Here is the distribution of his matter. Now, by and by, having sorted his materials, he falls to work; beginning first with the foundation, which he puts such a lustre upon, that it shines even like the sun, yea, more glorious than the sun in beauty: he sets forth Christ the foundation, in so many amiable considerations, as to ravish the world. And at verse 15, 16, begins to shew his faculty and expertness in this great work, that Christ entrusted him withal; namely, to be a wooer in his behalf, to win people to him, as in a former discourse upon this place, I have told you; and therein, I say, the apostle most rhetorically holds forth every thing, that is of a winning and desirable nature, to draw forth their love unto Christ. If people look for beauty, and that catch men; he tells us here, that Christ is an admirable piece of beauty, there is none like to him: saith the church, in the Canticles, "He is the chief of ten thousands;" but behold the beauty he mentions here: "He is the image of the invisible God." In Heb. i. 3, he speaks more fully to the business; "He is the express image of his person, and the brightness of his glory." Here is a face for you, if you be enamoured with beauty, there is none like him. Yea, but some look for parentage, one of noble blood, and of a great house; as they would have beauty, so they would marry into an honourable family. Well, the apostle will tell you here is a match for you with a witness; here is beauty, and a good race too. He is not only the express image of God, but he is the first-born of God; "The first begotten of every creature," verse 15, nay, the dear Son of God; here is a stock for you of the highest kindred in the world; he is the heir of glory, the heir apparent, that if you will match for honour into a great house, here are beauty and honour too. Yea, but you will say, it may be, he may be in disgrace, or hath no authority and power; we would have such a one. Christ is such, the whole

sovereignty of the world is at his command and disposal; as you would have it to be, so you have it, in verse 16. "All things are made by him, (saith the apostle) whether things in heaven, or things in earth, visible or invisible, principalities and powers, thrones, or dominions, all things were made by him, and for him;" as much as to say, every thing is subject unto him, every thing bows their knees to him; and in Phil. ii. he hath a name given to him above every other name, that, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whether things in heaven, or things in earth, or things under the earth." Tell me one that hath greater power and authority than he. If you will therefore match with advantage, here is a match for you. But some will say, He may have honour enough himself, but it may be he is a niggard, hard, and poor enough; is he bountiful and free? Beloved, the apostle tells us, in Colos. ii. 10, First, what he hath, he is not only honourable, but rich; "In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily." What is that to me, some will say? he may hoard it all up, I may have little enough of it; no, but saith he, "We are complete in him." He cannot abide to keep any thing to himself; in this he is a householder with a witness; he cannot eat his morsel alone, he must impart that he hath: the tender mother, if she have but a bit, the child must have half with her, and participate thereof. And therefore, in John i. 14, 16, "he is full of grace and truth, (saith the Holy Ghost) and of his fulness we have received grace for grace." What better husband can you desire in the world, than to have his whole purse at your command? You are not at stint and allowance; you may draw till all your wants are supplied, there is no shutting up of the chest of his treasure, he is a fountain set open for you. But to come to our purpose; there are two offices the Holy Ghost is pleased to acquaint us withal, proper unto Christ, as encouragement to win people unto him. The first is general, in respect of creation and providence over the world; the second is peculiar and special, over the church alone; that is the office mentioned in the text; "He is the head of the body, the church, the beginning."

In the words you may observe an allegorical proposition, and the exposition of the allegory: the proposition is, *He is the head of the body*. The interpretation of it is, *He is the beginning Church*. Again, in these note, 1. Whose office this is

here spoken of; it is he that is the head, even the image of ~~the~~ invisible God, the dear Son of God. 2. The office itself, what that is; it is *headship*; *he is the head of the church*. 3. Among whom this office is executed, and for whose use he executes it, that is, the *body*, interpreted the church, the several members of Christ.

I will not set down any other proposition, but what the apostle hath stated in the text, using his own words, "Christ is the head of the body, the church, the beginning." A head, and so consequently a body, admits of a three-fold consideration; sometimes it is taken naturally, and so proportionably it hath a body politic; but here it is taken spiritually for a spiritual head, and a spiritual body; Christ is the head, and the church, you see, is the body; so that this is here a mystical body; and it is called a body, not that it hath a completeness without a head; but in reference to the head, it is called a part of the whole. A body and a head are but a complete body together. Sometimes the body goes for a part, and sometimes for the whole. Here it is taken for a part only: but that we are to insist upon is this; 1. To take into consideration, who is this that is the head. 2. What this office of headship imports unto us. 3. How this head is furnished to the office that is proper for a head to a body. 4. And then as time will give leave, we will have a word or two of application.

1. Who this head is; you will say, we need not ask the question, it is confest by all it is Christ: it is true, it is so; but yet there is a mystery in it, and, peradventure, the thoughts of many persons are something more confused in the apprehension of him, as he is head, than haply they might be; and it may be there might be a more clear apprehension of Christ considered as such, than yet there is among us; I will therefore, as clearly as possible I may, state unto you, under what considerations Christ is to be considered, as head of his church, or of his members. Note, for the making way to this, that there are five very distinct things in Christ; and all of them, as you shall hear in the closure, concur together in him as head of the church.

1. In Christ there is the one only divine nature; there is no God in the world, but the God that Christ is: this is worth your consideration, for the minds of men are apt frequently to

distinguish so between God and Christ, as if God were one, and Christ distinctly another, and not God ; when, as the truth is, there is no other God in the world but what Christ himself is ; “ My Lord, and my God,” said Thomas, speaking to him. And in Col. ii. 9, the apostle saith, that “ in him dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily ; in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God,” John i. 1, Christ is God ; there is but one God in all the world ; and therefore you must know, that you are never to separate in your thoughts God from Christ ; always as you look upon Christ, so look upon God ; or, as you look upon God, look upon him no otherwise than as he is in Christ, not as if there were another God, besides what Christ is ; for there is no such thing.

2. Besides the godhead, there is the eternal, ineffable personality in Christ ; as he is God, so he is the Son : and in this, though we cannot fathom the difference, yet certainly there is a personal difference between the Father and Son : there is but one God, as I said before ; but the persons are three ; the Father is one, the Son is another, and the Holy Ghost is another :

There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” Now, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not all one personally, but the Son is the Son, and the Father is the Father ; but the godhead of the Father and of the Son is one, that is the true meaning ; there is a difference between the person of the Father, and of the Son ; but this matter is not to be pried into by human wit ; for this, of all the mysteries in scripture, is the pure object of mere faith ; there is no human way to illustrate the difference between the eternal Fatherhood and the eternal Sonship.

3. In Christ there is a distinct human nature ; that is, as this man is not that man ; such a distinct individual human nature Christ hath, having a peculiar soul and body of his own ; that which was born of the Virgin Mary, and suffered upon the cross ; distinct, I say, from our individual souls and bodies.

4. In Christ there is to be considered an ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatical union of the divine nature of the second person in the trinity, and human nature in one person. There is a difference between the being of God, and man, considered severally, and the being of Christ as mediator ; the godhead of

Christ is not the mediator simply, nor his manhood; but God and man in one person, as we call it, is the mediator.

5. Christ is to be considered not only personally, as he is God and man, being one individual person by himself; but collectively, that is, he is not only Christ as he is one person of himself, but as he himself in that one person is united to the persons of all the elect in the world; he and they make up but one collective body.

In brief, there is a kind of triune union in Christ; the divine union, which makes the Father and the Son one; the personal union, which makes the divine nature and the human nature one; the mystical union, which makes Christ the mediator God and man, one with all his members jointly. You know, that in respect of the last consideration, Christ, as he is collectively considered, consists of his own person as head; and of all the elect as members; so that in some sense he cannot be said to be separated, but hath his members knit unto him; a headless body, or a bodiless head, are equally both of them imperfect: if the church be separated from Christ, or Christ from the church, he should in the last consideration be imperfect. Now in this text, the apostle speaking of Christ, understands him in the last consideration; namely, as God the Son united to the human nature, or rather uniting the human nature unto himself; as these two natures in one person are united unto the church, or members of Christ, so Christ is the head. It is true, sometimes you have expressions of Christ's own, by way of subjection, "My father is greater than I;" and "I come not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" which phrases of Christ, being not rightly understood, occasion, in the thoughts of men, some conceits, as if God were a distinct being from Christ; that Christ makes God here greater than himself; whereas the truth is, there is, as I said before, no God but what Christ is: Christ never acknowledges, that the godhead of his Father is greater than his own: for, the Father and the Son are but one in the godhead; and therefore, when he in his speech hath reference unto God, it is unto the divine nature that is united unto his humanity; and the very nature of God is within himself, and there is no other; therefore there is no distinct God in the world, but that God that is become man, and is now called Christ: therefore you are never to look upon

Christ, but as he is the complete only true God. What need all this discourse, you will say? I answer, You must have Christ set forth in this consideration, or else you shall never be able to reach that he is the head: therefore the consideration of the second thing will clear the usefulness of the first, what this headship is; the text saith, "He is the beginning," that is, the root and spring from whence things have their first being: now, mark, beloved, either the apostle must speak false when he saith, he is *the beginning*, or else you must consider Christ as the only God. All the world grants God to be the beginning of all things; therefore, if there be any thing in the world that should be the beginning of being besides Christ, he himself cannot be the beginning of all things; therefore, for the maintenance of this prerogative of Christ *being the beginning* and fountain, he is to be considered always as the only God. Now, this word *beginning* imports unto us, that Christ is first the beginning of being; and, secondly, the beginning of well being: he is the beginning of being in general; "All things were made by him, and without him there was nothing made that was made," John i. 3. And here, "All things were created by him, whether visible or invisible, principalities, and powers, thrones or dominions."

1. The main thing the apostle drives at is this, that Christ is the beginning of the church, that is, of them, being members of himself: every member of the church of Christ received his first being from him, and from none other. Consider the original beginning of them, even in eternity itself, if it may be properly called a beginning, it hath its being from Christ himself. Mark the apostle in Ephes. i. 3, 4: "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." This expression may seem to some, to import a difference between God and Christ, or something distinct one from the other, as if Christ were the subject in whom, and God the author by whom persons are chosen; but, beloved, properly there is no such thing as Christ distinct from God, so as if he were not God; if God be in Christ, then it is Christ himself, as he is God, that doth it: and, therefore, if you will mark the expression well, it may be, you shall see that it is Christ himself that hath chosen us; I con-

fess, the words may have a double reference, either to the **Father, or to Christ**; and according to this second reference, **Christ may** be conceived both the object and the fountain too, in whom you are chosen; and the expression, perhaps, will bear both: "According as he hath chosen us in him;" that is, according as he in him chose us; but, howsoever, all comes to one effect, the Father and the Son being one God.

2. To come to particulars; Christ is the beginning of a present possessive being, as persons are members of him. He is the beginning of a possessive being, or being in possession. Consider the first thing in the being of a member, that is life; which is spiritual, and so peculiar to a member, hath its first rise from Christ himself; mark the expression in Eph. ii. 10: "Created us in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." You are created of God in Christ Jesus to good works; or, God in Christ hath done it. The very self-same phrase the apostle useth in 2 Cor. v. 19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The truth is, it pleased the divine nature to unite the human nature to itself, and so to manage the affairs of the church in those two natures so united; not as if God gave out some of himself to the human nature, and reserved some of itself to itself; but the whole divine nature gave up itself, though only in the second person; "God was in Christ," as much as to say, whole God; the divine nature assumed a human nature, and so makes up a Christ; and thus God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. You shall see elsewhere, that the beginning of life in a member of Christ flows from him: your life is hid with Christ in God. It is such another phrase as the two former; that is, it is hid in that God, who, by being man, is become Christ; for that is all the difference between God and Christ; between God simply and absolutely considered in himself, and considered as ineffably united to the human nature: God, thus united, becomes Christ; and so in such a union is reconciling the world unto himself, and takes the church, who is his body. The apostle tells us further, "Now I live;" but he presently checks himself, "yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Christ is the soul of the body, and as the body without a soul is dead, so a person without Christ is dead.

I will not enter into that needless dispute of the philosophers, whether the soul be seated in the head principally, or in the

heart ; but this I am sure of, the life and soul of the church **is in** the head of it ; “ I am the way, the truth, and the life ;” he is the life of the soul of man ; as the body without the soul is dead, even so, if there could be such a thing as the body, the church, without Christ, it would be a dead thing ; it hath all animal virtue from him alone ; it hath all life in all respects from him : take life in the first fruits, in its sense or motion, all spiritual sense, motion, actions, and activeness, receive being and beginning only from Christ ; “ He is given for a covenant to open the blind eyes.” All eyes are blind till he opens them : there is no seeing till the body receives sight from the head. The head causeth us also to smell, as well as to see, the sweet savour of the ointment of Christ, that makes the virgins to love him ; “ Because of the savour of thy good ointments, therefore do the virgins love thee.” Now, this savour being as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed, to smell this, is the sole work of Christ himself ; also the spiritual taste, to taste how good God is, to relish the sweetness of the spiritual wine, well refined upon the lees, is all by the power of Christ, and hath its being from him ; so all our feeling, to feel comfort, joy unspeakable and glorious, **all is** from Christ ; he opens our eyes, bores our ears, and causeth us to smell.

You will say, all this is the work of the Spirit ; why do you say it is the work of Christ ? Mark what John saith, in chap. xvi. *He*, that is, the Spirit, “ shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” The Spirit himself, as he dealeth with the members of Christ, is his agent proceeding from Christ, communicating that grace which is his to them. So that the Spirit is, as it were, a conduit-pipe, through whom the fulness of the fountain conveys itself, and runs forth to every member. The Spirit is as the nerves and veins in the natural body. The blood, you know, hath its fountain from the liver ; but the veins carry it into every part of the body ; and as the natural eye cannot see, except the nerves feed it with visive spirits ; so neither can any eye behold the secrets of the Lord, the hidden things of Christ, such as he thanks his Father he reveals unto babes, while he hides them from the wise of the world, except the Lord Christ feeds the members with his own spirit. It is not the eye that sees of itself, but the spirits that come from the head, cause sight by it : for there may be an eye and no sight, where

the want of these spirits is. Look over all the book of God, and you shall find, that there is no action that comes from the Spirit, but Christ is the head and spring of it ; you shall find the strength and hearts of people fail when he withdraws himself ; it is he that is the strength of them for ever ; “ Fear not, (saith the text,) be not dismayed ; I will uphold thee, I will strengthen thee.” There must needs be miscarriage for want of power, except Christ come with his strength and power to uphold. Therefore, when Paul exhorts those to whom he writes, to work the works of the Lord, he gives them this counsel : “ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might :” and again, “ Put on the whole armour of God.” Now it is a vain thing to think of taking up of arms, except there be strength to manage them. Saul thought David to be a puny, when he was to fight with Goliath, and had no regard to him, although he might have good armour on ; he was too little a man : what Saul thought of David, is true of all the whole armour of God, it is to no purpose, except men be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And therefore, when Paul was in a strait, he begged, and begged again, to have strength given ; though he had not an answer to his mind, yet God told him, “ My grace is sufficient for thee ; my strength is made perfect in weakness.” All are weak, but as they have strength in Christ ; yea, there is no strength but what is his, and is sent by him. Let me tell you this ; and, I beseech you, consider, they that have Christ for their head, have an infinite advantage above the closest hypocrite in the world, though he go never so far : all he doth is but from a weak principle : Christ is not the principle of that he doth ; but he that hath Christ for his head, hath a spring of fulness. The Holy Ghost tells us, “ He is full of grace and truth ;” and, “ in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily :” and, “ It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell :” so that you may plainly see, that the preaching of Christ as head, and setting up all his glory, is not the preaching of licentious liberty to men. He that can by the power of God, win a person to be a true member of this head, Christ brings that person into a fat soil ; he transplants him from a barren, a rocky one, into a rich one ; whereby he comes to abound in all manner of fruitfulness*. And certainly, beloved, fruitfulness will be more abundant as the soul can apprehend

* Phil. i. 2 ; Gal. v. 22.

itself by true faith, to be a part of this head; for, the head will communicate, that the soul itself cannot contain itself in its own bounds; "The love of Christ constrains me," saith Paul, he can do no otherwise; he that is driven must needs go: Christ drives and makes himself a way into his members; he breaks his own way into them, and so sets them on, and puts them forwards.

Then again, Christ being the beginning of all our being, is also of all prerogatives and privileges whatsoever the church hath; they have no privilege, but as it flows from him; as first of all, even justification itself comes from Christ. It may be, you will object, that the text saith, "That God justifies the ungodly," and how then doth Christ justify them? I say still; that which God doth, Christ doth; God is still in Christ; he doth nothing, but Christ doth all things. All the Father hath, he hath given to the Son; "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." The meaning, I take it, is this; God, as he is simply one divine essence in himself, doth not in this simple consideration of himself, manage any thing in this kind; but all in his Son; and that as he is become man. So that whosoever are justified, are justified by the Son; and whosoever come to the knowledge of justification, attain to it also by Christ: "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given us of God." Now, this Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; so then, the knowledge of the things freely given us of God, is by the Spirit. Nothing can acquaint the soul, and satisfy it of an interest in Christ, and being a member of his, but the Spirit of God; that must resolve the case at last, do what you can; every thing is dumb and silent, but as he speaks; the word of God, even the word of grace, is a dumb letter, but as the Spirit speaks in it, or with it; and so of all things in the world; and therefore, beloved, know, you run into those two great evils, the Holy Ghost speaks of in Jer. ii. 13: "Forsaking the fountain of living water, and digging to yourselves cisterns that can hold no water;" while you forsake Christ, the spring and fountain, and go to pump and fetch any thing, you take from any besides him: if you run to creatures, you make not Christ the beginning.

You will say, you suppose and believe Christ to be the begin-

ning in all. But, I say, is this good, shall he be but supposed ? and shall services be set up to take up all the affections, suits, and pleadings of your hearts ? How hath Christ all the priority ? In Col. i. 18, he is said to be the head of the body, the church, "That he might have the pre-eminence in all things." Why do people then run to other things, and magnify, and extol them, while Christ shall not have a good word ? Nay, they are afraid to speak out of things that are his, for fear of giving liberty to sin, and charge people to take heed of the setting forth of Christ, and grace by him, as a dangerous doctrine ; so seldom daring to speak of his excellencies, and of the excellent privileges and benefits that come by, and from him ; nor of the freeness of those things that are conveyed unto us, in and through him. And why, Oh ! this will make men run out into all manner of licentiousness and profaneness, without controul ; and so Christ shall be suppressed, for fear of giving liberty ; and, in the mean while, other things shall be set up above Christ ; the divine rhetoric of repentance, and humiliation ; the prevalency of tears to wash away sin, and our conscionable walking to commend us to God at the last day ; here must be a magnifying of man's righteousness ; and when these things come to be examined, they are but rhetorical expressions. Beloved, God grant that our rhetoric may advance him, that is to be advanced, and keep all other things in their own places, that are to be kept low, that nothing may have the pre-eminence of Christ, he being the head and beginning of all things ; that the people of God may go with their buckets to the wells of salvation, and draw waters of life from thence, and not run to muddy puddles. The zeal of the Lord Christ, who hath so magnified the riches of his grace to his people, should eat up your spirits, and raise up your souls against every thing that raises itself up, to exalt itself above him. If Christ be not the beginning, but something else, let that have the pre-eminence ; but if he be, let him have it. As Elijah once said to the idolatrous Israelites, that had forsaken the Lord, and set up the works of their own hands instead of him : " If Baal be God, then worship him ; but if God be God, then serve and worship him : " so I say, at this present, unto you ; if you will acknowledge Christ to be the beginning, let it appear in setting him up above all other things in your hearts and thoughts ; make him your sanctuary, and refuge ; wait upon him for all things ;

why are your hearts so cast down ? It may be, corruptions prevail within you ; fear not, is not there enough in the fountain to refresh thee, and supply thee with strength against them ? Doth Satan seek to overcome you by his temptations, and, like a roaring lion, to devour you ? He is able to tread down Satan under your feet. Beloved, will you starve in a cook's shop, as they say ? Is there such plenty in Christ, and will you perish for hunger ? You will answer, it may be, you would close with him, you would go to him for supply with all your hearts, but you dare not, you are afraid he will reject you, if you come to him. Beloved, come to Christ, and he will not cast you off. Is there any thing in the world you would have ? would you have joy, and peace ? Come to him, and the God of peace will fill you with all peace and joy in believing. Would you have your iniquities subdued ? come to him, and sin shall not have dominion over you, saith the apostle ; for, " Ye are not under the law, but under grace ;" for it is the grace of God that brings salvation from sin, as well as from wrath : and, " this grace of God, (saith the apostle), will teach you to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust." There is no greater motive in the world to encourage man to venture upon any thing that Christ puts him upon, than this ; that he hath him to enable and lead him through it. In the mean time, give me leave to put one caution to you ; Christ, I say, being the head, and as the head being the beginning, the supplier of all things pertaining to life and godliness ; if there be any persons that either now, or at any other time, make these most desperate conclusions from any thing that they have heard, as that they may continue to sin, and go on in iniquity, Christ hath died for them ; let them sin as much as they can, they cannot out-sin the death of Christ ; if there be any person that charges any such untruth upon any minister, and will collect such blasphemies from the doctrine of the gospel of Christ, let them know, that God will either bring them to see the greatness of their folly, and to be ashamed of it ; or, for ought I know, they may have their deserved portion in the lowest part of hell. I dare be bold to say, there is no people under heaven, who are so prejudicial to the gospel of Christ, as such stumbling blocks are ; nor unto trembling hearts that would fain close with the free grace of God in Christ, as such persons that take liberty to sin, that grace may abound ; causing the

gospel to be evil spoken of, and detested, and that scandalous name to be raised upon it, that it is a doctrine of liberty Beloved, as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; and he that hath called you, will make you holy as he is holy.

1 In a word, here is matter of exhortation; if Christ be the head and the beginning of all things, look up to the head, suck at it, draw from it, let nothing draw you from that.

2. Here is matter of consolation to all the members of Christ; as long as the head hath in itself, the body shall never want. Such a head Christ is, that hath all fulness in him, he can never be drawn dry: he is not as the springs Job speaks of, brooks that fail in summer, but this spring is of such an excellent nature, that he makes an everlasting spring in the heart, whereinto he pours himself: so saith he, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water shall be in him a well springing up unto eternal life." Know assuredly, and be confident of it, God must cease to be God, before there can be a lack of supply of what is useful for you, Christ is head, and as such, he is God, as well as man; God himself then must be drawn dry before you shall want any thing that is good for you: therefore, let Satan and all the world set themselves against you, you shall never have cause to say, all the springs are dried up, now there is no hope of any more supply; for certainly the Lord will maintain and continue that which he hath undertaken; "I am God, and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

SERMON XLIII*.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING WITHOUT SIGHT

JOHN XX. 29.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED.

OUR blessed Saviour, out of mere tender pity to man, sunk in his own filth, and stuck so fast, that he could not possibly crawl out, undertook his recovery, by making his soul an offering for sin, "that whosoever believe on him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Now because a necessity lay upon him to compass this work of redemption in so ignominious a way, as by the cursed death of the cross, which was likely (as he knew) to prove a sore stumbling block of offence to the little faith of his disciples; therefore, whilst he remained with them, his great care was to remove it out of the way before-hand; (1.) By declaring the expediency, nay, necessity of such humiliation. (2.) By working such strange miracles as might fully satisfy them of his all-sufficiency; especially those latter miracles of restoring sight to the man born blind, and raising Lazarus after he had been four days dead. (3.) By declaring his raising up of himself again the third day after his death, of which his miracle on Lazarus was a sufficient evidence; he having been dead four days, when himself would lie dead but till the third. All which arguments were little enough, it seems, to keep their faith from tottering, being assaulted by the principles of sense and natural reason; for the faith of them all reeled, none of them stood fast until Christ, through condescension to their weakness, settled them again with the crutch of sense; appearing again

* Here begins the fourth volume in the last edition, containing ten sermons, published by the Doctor's son, from his father's notes.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF

unto them, and manifesting himself to be risen.

Thomas's hap, being absent from his fellows, to be last in believing; not so much because his faith was weaker than theirs, but because it was not his lot to see him when they did: for when the woman told the eleven that Christ was risen, before they saw him, St. Luke tells us, that "the woman's words seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not;" and, therefore, although Christ immediately before my text, upbraids Thomas's weak faith in special, yet hath a secret fling at the weakness of the faith of them all who staggered until they had seen him; so that notwithstanding he did bear with, and overlook the present weakness, yet here he acquaints them and us all, what is the best and most *blessed* faith, namely, a *believing without sight*.

This text, for the kind of it, is doctrinal, sweetly mixed with consolatory matter: the doctrinal part unfolds the proper way and working of faith, namely, *to believe without sight*. The ingredient of consolation mixed herewith, is the richest cordial a soul can take, namely, *blessedness* to all that so believe. We will not alter this receipt of Christ, but give it you as himself hath made it; only that you may the better be induced to take it (because the outward hue of it doth not promise the sweetness it contains, it seeming to a careless natural eye a very paradox) we will therefore read you a brief lecture on the most material particulars therein contained, for your oetter satisfaction in what is hidden, and not clear enough to common apprehensions. Two things here are of most moment to be considered: (1.) What it is to believe, when and where there is no sight (2.) Wherein such believing makes a man blessed.

For the clearing of the first, note, that there is a threefold-sight often mentioned in the scripture, viz. (1.) Corporeal; (2.) Rational; (3.) Spiritual; all very pragmatical, and ready to thrust their oars into faith's boat, though they endanger the sinking of it, or the putting it farther from shore; for faith rows backward to get forward, as boatmen; when these will be rowing with the face forward, thinking faith's way madness.

1. The corporeal sight is taken sometimes properly, for the natural operations of the bodily eye; sometimes synecdochically for the exercise of all, or any of the senses, such as hearing, feeling, and the rest. We need go no further than the text and coherence, to know that sight in the latter and larger sense is

not only used in scripture, but also intended in this place to be sequestered from believing. Thomas will not believe, except he *see the print of the nails in Christ's hands, and thrust his hands into his sides*; which exceptions, when granted him, both in *seeing* and *touching* him, he puts both into the word [*seen*.] *Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed, blessed, &c.* But for further clearing hereof, you must note, that although this sight and touching of Christ's body risen, be principally here intended, by reason of the occasion offered from Thomas's unbelief, yet our Saviour intended his speech should extend further, to all natural sense in any other cases; for he speaks not so restrictively in the text, as to limit it only to the present occasion; then he should have added to *seen* [*me, or my body*] and should have mentioned Thomas only here, and not said blessed is *he* in general, which includes all believers. It is therefore to be understood, that the corporeal sight here intended to be sequestered from a blessed believing, implies all such visible and palpable natural things, which men are naturally apt to fly unto, and rest on to keep them from staggering at Christ's promises especially, without which their faith is very wavering.

For the further clearing of our Saviour's intent, about the mixing of natural sense with faith to support it, I will illustrate it in two sorts of instances: 1. In personal cases. 2. In cases that concern the church-in general.

(1.) That which Christ aims at in personal cases is this, namely, when we find any promises of the good we desire or want, he would not have us judge of the likelihood or unlikelihood of their accomplishment, by the probability or improbability of concurring sensible means: for example, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee:" when wind and tide are all with us, when outward things are all flowing towards us, within ken, we suspect not, nor are anxiously disquieted with doubts or scruples of miscarriage, but believe; but when God takes away these sensible crutches, and leaves nothing in the eye but his promises, we are presently troubled; a thousand objections then arise, and make us reel to and fro like a drunken man, and we are even at our wits' end. It was David's weakness, for whilst he knew of any holes or holds of safety to secure him from Saul, he staggers not at the promise of the kingdom; but when

Saul had haunted him out of all, and no more was left him, then his faith reels, and, as he confesseth, *He said in his haste that all men were liars*, even Samuel himself. And again, in his staggering he cries out, “I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.” Examples are infinite of this kind; such are Moses in the matter of food in the wilderness, and fetching water out of a rock; the prince upon whom the king leaned when the famine was in Samaria, and the prophet foretold a sudden plenty; and the disciples about the few loaves and fishes for the feeding so many thousands. Now our Saviour in this place and case would have our faith abstracted from these sensible means, and not lean a jot to them, but settle on the promise alone as its sole bottom; yet not as if we should wholly neglect the use of such means as he puts into our hands, but faith must not lean to them as a lame man on a crutch.

(2.) For the church in general, Christ promiseth that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;” and that “no weapon formed against it shall prosper:” here he would not have our faith consult with sensible probabilities or improbabilities, for quieting or satisfying of us in the truth and accomplishment of these promises. For example, whilst a church, or this our church, hath the concurrent hands and voices of great patrons to support or raise it, and we see their activity, wisdom, and power, working that way, we conclude, with a settled security, that it shall “stand fast like mount Sion,” and shall mount up; but if the tide turns, or storms arise, her great patrons withdraw, or are scattered by might, and great politicians lay siege against her, when hopeful means are dashed, and former likelihoods come to nothing, then for all the promises we hang the lip, and grow desperate; this is to join sense to faith, which our Saviour here would have separated from it, intending that the failing and disappointing of such and such sensible means, should not a jot alter our confidence in the promises, or cause us to be the more jealous of them. A notable illustration of this you have in God’s people, in Ezek. xxxvii. 1—11, who seemed to themselves as *dry bones*, because they saw no refuge to fly to; therefore he shews a notable *vision of dry bones*, raised to a mighty active army; intimating that God’s promises to his church, are never put to straits by the greatest natural impossibilities, and that therefore our faith should not be brought to so uneven, deceitful, and rusty a beam.

2. As natural sense, so natural reason is to be sequestered from believing; where let us consider, (1.) What the sight of natural reason is. (For that there is such an eye I need not stay to prove.) (2.) What it is to sequester it from believing: for the former, in brief, it is in general no more but a certain evidence of the truth of things, and of their coming to pass, so far only as by natural principles, and dependence of effects on their causes, the discourse of reason can demonstrate and infer. For the clearer illustration of this, (because it is very common to call this natural reason to counsel, whereon we are apt to rely much for the certainty of things to be believed,) know more particularly, that a man is said to see things by natural reason, when, knowing what effects natural causes will produce, and what not, he concludes of such effects accordingly. As for instance, a man by rational sight knowing that fire naturally burns, but cannot cool a thing; hence he concludes certainly, that such or such a thing cast into the fire must needs be burnt. So, also, knowing that lesser might is overtopped by greater, certainly concludes that the weakest must needs go to the wall. Now further consider, that where reason cannot find or pry into the adequateness of a cause, to produce such or such an effect, let who will affirm, it shall be produced, it will not be embraced: in brief, such an adhering unto the evidence of things only as reason can make by its natural discourse, rejecting all things else, at least as doubtful, which it cannot dive into, this is properly a rational sight.

This will be more clear in considering the next thing, namely, What it is to sequester rational sight from believing; for clearing whereof, you must not conceive that a man must be an unreasonable creature, or cease to be reasonable when he believes; there is a necessary use of reason in believing, insomuch as creatures without that are not capable of it. It were not, therefore, amiss, to understand what sight of reason is necessary, and what must be separated: Note, (1.) That inferring conclusions from adequate causes known, which is the special work of reason, is necessary unto faith: as for example, when God saith, "I blot out your transgressions for mine own sake;" it is impossible to believe this without the use of reason. For, 1. The thing must be understood by an intellectual faculty; natural idiots cannot believe. 2. There must be some ground or reason of believing it, something that must draw the soul to be persuaded of it:

namely, because God speaks it, who is able to make it good, and the Spirit by the word persuades, that it is he that speaks it, and that he is able, faithful, and true. The apostle tells us, that "we must be able to give a reason of our hope," or faith; therefore we must have reason for it: you will then say, what sight of reason must be separated from believing? I answer, whereas natural reason judgeth and concludeth of events according to the efficacy, or inefficacy of natural causes, as if a thing could not come to pass except the womb of nature could afford it; this principle must be denied in believing divine truths, and an infinite efficacy must be allowed to an infinite supernatural cause; God himself being infinitely beyond all natural causes in the world: the truth is, that the judgment of natural reason about heavenly things, from the efficacy of natural things, secluding supernatural, is worse than a blind man judging of colours, which although he see not himself, yet he is apt to judge as seeing men do; whereas natural reason is peremptory, and will not yield one jot beyond its dim sight. You may observe it an ordinary thing, when God makes promises of greater things than nature produceth, then natural reason is called to consult and deliberate, nay, to give its vote to such promises; as in those cases of Moses before mentioned; "Ye rebels, must I fetch water out of a rock?" He consults with the rock, what efficacy it had to give water, and so he staggered; and with the barren wilderness, what it had to afford food; they pleading impossibility, his faith staggers, which lost him the temporal Canaan. In brief, see it in Sarah, consulting with her old age, and the deadness of her womb, whether nature could produce the promised seed from them; which they denying, she laughs at it. Nicodemus also, about the mystery of regeneration, reasons with nature, whether it could receive a man, being old, into his mother's womb again, and so, instead of believing, cries out, 'How can these things be?' And the disciples consult with death and the grave, whether they could send their guests away live again, as Thomas here did, so believes not the resurrection of Christ. On the other side, see how Abraham sequesters the light of reason from his faith in the promised seed; "He considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb;" that is, he stopped his ears, and would not hear the reasons nature would suggest of the impossibility of the thing

So the three children would not hear nor mind what the nature of the fire could say to deter them, but stick to this, *Our God is able, and will deliver us*, let fire say what it can. Now the faith which Christ commends here, is such as must be abstracted, both from the encouragements and discouragements which natural discourse of reason can suggest; that is, it must neither lean nor venture any weight on the one, or be startled or unsettled by the other: but without regarding either, stand fast on its own bottom only, to wit, the self-sufficient authority of divine truth, never asking, no, nor yet regarding how likely, or unlikely, it is to reason that such a truth should come to pass.

3. There is also a spiritual seeing of things mentioned often in the scripture: now, the question is, whether this spiritual sight must be abstracted from believing? For the full answer hereof you must first distinguish of spiritual sight, as before of the *bodily*. (1.) It is used oftentimes strictly, for a sanctified understanding, knowledge, spiritual discerning God's revealing unto, and acquainting the soul with the secrets of his divine mysteries, according to that prayer of David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wonders of thy law." (2.) It is taken sometimes more largely, for spiritual sense, or experimental feeling of God's comfortable presence and power, according to that of the Psalmist, "Taste and see how good the Lord is." So likewise are those passages of God's *lifting up of the light of his countenance*, and *shewing his face*, to be understood of a spiritual sense, or experimental feeling of God's love, yet expressed by *seeing his face*. Now, to resolve the question, I answer, that the former, to wit, a spiritual understanding, or insight into the mysteries of the gospel, is absolutely essential to believing, without which it hath no subsistence; for, "Without knowledge the heart is not good," and therefore cannot be a believing heart, from whence it obtains that denomination of goodness. Therefore it is, that knowledge is sometimes spoken of in scripture instead of believing; "This is life eternal, to know thee." Whereas salvation comes by faith; men must hear, and by hearing must understand, before they can believe; so St. Paul tells us, that *faith comes by hearing*. This single eye is that which makes the whole body of faith full of light; whereas, if this be dark, that must be full of darkness. A blind faith led by a blind mind, must needs throw the man (blind in

both these eyes) into the ditch. But this sight must not be the basis of faith, but the thing known; else we fetch the rise of faith from within ourselves.

As for the other branch of spiritual sight, namely, experimental spiritual sense; I shall desire you to mark the resolution of this exactly, which, that I may perform the more clearly, I shall endeavour to shew you, (1.) What this experimental spiritual sense is; (2.) How far it must be shut up, and not regarded in the act of believing. (1.) For spiritual experimental sense, you are to consider it present, or absent. Spiritual sense present, is an actual feeling within one's self, "God the Spirit taking of the things of Christ and shewing them to us;" and that sensibly satisfied and refreshed with actual joy and solace therewith; a feeling the virtue and power of the gracious promises of the gospel actually diffused into the soul, and their energetical, or powerful workings, together with the several graces of the spirit, sensibly flourishing as green bay-trees, sending forth continually plentiful, large, and beautiful fruits; so that the stomach is not more sensible of the comforts and repairs by meat eaten with an hungry appetite, than the soul is with the digested bread of life. For example, when a person feels the enlarged workings of the spirit of mourning, prayer, and mortification, so that by them it mounts as with the wings of an eagle, it runs and is not weary; this, and such like, is a present experimental spiritual sense: when all this, and the like, is absent from the soul, so that God stands afar off, seems to thrust away, and will not give a good look, the promises seem to fail; as David complains, as if they were like a spring in drought, quite dried up, or a dry breast, that not a drop of sweetness will come, suck the soul as hard as it can: in regard of the exercise of grace, the soul seems as a channel from whence the feeding spring is diverted, all dry; or as a tree in the winter, so naked, as that it seems dead: tears and prayers are dried up, mortification and self-denial are of leaden heels, and the soul seems as bound hand and foot; this, and the like, is a case wherein spiritual sight, or sense, is absent.

Now, (2.) To come home to both these conditions of spiritual sense and senselessness, 1. I say, where God is pleased to give the present operative virtue thereof, it should be cherished with all joy and thankfulness, as being a taste of heaven, and a com-

fortable means of an abundant glorifying of God. But yet, 2. I say, it is very dangerous to faith to lean on this spiritual sense for the certainty and stability of promises which concern future time. More plainly, my meaning is this ; if such a one, thus possessed of spiritual sense, look upon promises for further good, and to be quietly settled about the due accomplishment of them, shall build on his present experiences, and not mind a sure foundation of the settling of the Spirit ; nay, if he set but one foot on this experience to rest his faith on, he shall totter sooner than he is aware, though the other foot be on the firm ground of God's truth and faithfulness. It is with such a one, as with a man that hath one foot on firm ground, and the other on a loose, or floating board ; when that slips or falls, he will hardly stand fast, how firm soever the other foot stands. Who knows not the ebbings as well as flowings of spiritual present experiences, the risings and settings of them ? let David speak for all ; one while his heart is ravished and enlarged, it is full sea with him, his spiritual sails are filled ; by and by his sun is set, his channel is dry, the wind is turned into the teeth of him (as I may say), and he is roaring and crying out of God's forsaking him. You that have been wrapped up with him, have you not been in the bottom with him too ? Hath it not been April weather with you, now a fair sun-shine, at another time a great storm falls, and this with a frequent vicissitude ? Now, can that be good ground for any part of a foundation to be laid, that is so sinking ? Suppose the most of the building of your confidence be on the rock, God's faithfulness and power ; yet if but one corner be built on this experience that will give way, will it not endanger the drawing of the whole confidence at least aside ? You will say, may I not gather confidence from former experience ? No, not from the experience itself, but God's manifesting his faithfulness in fulfilling former promises. You will say, I do no otherwise. I answer, there are many who think they do no otherwise, yet do ; for if God's faithfulness were the settlement of thy faith, in thy full tide of experience, and not the sense itself, how is it that he no sooner hides his face, but thou art troubled ; thy faith is tottered ? Hast thou no more questioned, or staggered at promises, being down, than when thou wert up ? If so, why is it thus ? Were the whole building of thy faith on the rock only before-mentioned, that changeth not with the change of thy sense, there

would be no more cause of doubt, or suspicion, than there was before. The true cause, indeed, is this; too much weight was adventured on that thawing ice.

Beloved, you had need be wise, even you that are in Christ's wine-cellar, "now stay'd with his flaggons, and comforted with his apples:" for if you depend too much on these love-tokens, and judge of love by the flowings in of them; God seeing himself robbed of the dependence due to him, may on purpose withhold, that you may learn not to trust on uncertain experiences, but on the living God; and it may be, if you be not wary, it must cost you dearer than you would; the wisest may happily learn some wisdom; I doubt not, but that Christ who gives light, will guide by his Spirit into the needful truths he teacheth.

So I come to the second thing considerable about spiritual sense; namely, the absence of those spiritual experiences before-mentioned. Here many a fearful soul is a most bitter advocate against itself, nay, a misled judge too. When spiritual experiences fail, and their flourishing sappiness is sunk out of view, they do not only plead against believing promises, and urge vehemently what may be objected, but proceed to a fearful sentence, that it is presumption to depend on the promises, as long as it is so bad with them, and that they belong not to them, because they are at so low an ebb in spirituals. Before I enter on the clearing of this business, know, that it is far from my purpose to justify any defects in grace, or to rock any asleep in a naked condition; but rather by this discourse to set them in the right way again. To come to the purpose, I say it is not only no presumption, but the blessed faith which our Saviour and the Holy Ghost every where commend, to believe in Christ, and apply the promises to themselves as their own; even then, when spiritual experiences are vanished quite out of sight or sense. As for example, such a one, as for the present hath not sweet tastes, or sensible embraces of God's love, but rather the contrary, feeling the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and the like; I say, for such a one in this case to believe God to be his God, is a blessed faith. This seems at first a very paradox; but stay a while, and I shall make it a manifest truth, both by scripture, example, and precept. You know Job's case, what a terror God was to him, how (at least as he thought) "God took him

for an enemy, and wrote bitter things against him, making him to possess the sins of his youth." He was as low as man could lie, in regard of God's sensible favour being hid from him; yet as low as he was, his faith was not dashed herewith; "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him," saith he: his meaning is, though these terrors of the Almighty exhaust his soul, so that he die without the sense of God's favour, yet he will trust still. Dare any say, that this was presumption in him? Nay, that it was not an heroic act of faith? And why mayest thou not say, and do as well as he? There can nothing of moment be objected against this instance that I know. I will name but one more without all exception. You know how Christ himself complains, *That God hath forsaken him*; yet even then he saith, *My God, my God*. If you say these are rare examples, not to be reached, (although that be not true) see God's charge to believe even in this case; "Who is among you that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord," Isa. l. 10.

But many are apt to think, if I were sure he were my God, I might trust in him without sense. Now though this be a very common objection, yet who sees not the vanity of it? What is it to be sure, but to have the sense of his favour? Now the case we have in hand, supposeth this sense removed and gone, and no appearance of it; so that the objection is but this, if I had sense I might believe without it, which is either nonsense, or a contradiction. But it will be further objected, That if men must believe that have no experience, then wicked and unregenerate persons may believe the promises. I answer, 1. That whilst they are such, they neither will, nor care to believe them one with another; indeed, they cannot believe them, (whilst such) for it is not yet given them to believe or mind them. But 2. I answer, That wicked men may, if they can, believe the promises before they have experience; nay, I say further, that no man shall ever have experiences, until he believe without experiences: doth not God justify the ungodly, even whilst he is so? Doth he not find him so, and at that time cast his love on him? If God doth so, what impropriety or incongruity is it to believe he doth so? You will say this is at first conversion; but I answer, Is not God's love as free afterwards to rise anew after some setting? doth not God return for his own name sake only? and if he do, must not our faith be on that name only? The truth is, man's nature is apt to

look after some loveliness or beauty in himself to win God, and therefore when he can find no such thing, he is out of heart : this popery is natural, the fine-spun distinctions to evade it are mere fig-leaves, not able to cover the nakedness of it ; he that comes to God and his promises with a blind-folded faith (I mean a faith that takes notice of nothing in himself, whether good or evil) is God's welcomest guest.

But some will say, They look not after any thing of their own, but God's work in them ; this they would find : but I would know, to what purpose ? if to rejoice therein, or glorify God thereby, it is good, but nothing to this purpose of believing in Christ and his promises : if you would find them for encouragement to believe, know that God's way is the nearest way to believe whatever you think of any other ; his way is for faith to go alone, and not with such crutches : he knows they hinder the pace of faith, and often lay it in the dirt. Know that you must not be your own carvers. Thomas thought it a far easier way to believe Christ to be risen, by seeing him, than by running to the promises without sight of him ; and we all naturally follow him the same way, it being the readier way to our poring hearts ; but Christ saith in my text, the other is the right and blessed way. You will further object, if want of spiritual experience may not keep men off from believing, then a man may live as he list, and yet believe the promises. This indeed is a great objection, which I doubt too many make too much use of to their destruction : for the more full answering of it, therefore, know, that neither Christ nor his promises must be divided, for men to pick and chuse what they list, and leave the rest ; men must take him and them one with another. I know licentious persons would be glad of salvation from wrath by Christ, and of temporal good ; and they are apt to assume a liberty from this point, that their faith is good, and the promises shall be performed to them, though they have no goodness : but have they any heart to believe other promises as well as these, those of mortification of sin, and holiness of life, that God in the attendance on his ordinances will subdue their iniquities, and cause them to walk in his testimonies ? These are no bits for their palate. Now they that truly believe, having no spiritual sense, embrace all sorts of promises, and as eagerly pursue mortification and holiness promised, as deliverance from wrath : they would as gladly have Christ to reign in and over

them, as to blot out their transgressions. The text imports so much in the generality of the expression, not believing some few culled things out of Christ and his promises, leaving the rest; but believing in *whole* Christ, and all sorts of his promises. In brief, let not wicked men's snatching at what they cannot catch, hinder any bleeding, panting soul, that fain would, but dares not embrace Christ and his promises, from receiving this gracious speech of his, and the like expressions of scripture, that notwithstanding sense fails, yet in believing when it fails, they are blessed.

Consider we now, what blessedness that is which attends such a believing as secludes sight: there is a three-fold special blessedness attending it.

1. A blessedness of present sweet repose, or rest, in all conditions, without disturbance. I need not contend, I know, to make this good, that it is a blessed condition indeed to sleep on such a pillow as evaporates all cares out of the head, and drives away all anxieties of heart, and dispels all tossing, turbulent fears; so that he who lays his head on it, can sleep as securely in a storm as in a calm, in a prison as in a palace, in the most pinching penury as the greatest plenty: now such, yea and far more excellent a pillow, is this faith in Christ alone. Faith mixt with sense comes not near it in this great privilege, which I shall clearly illustrate by many evidences. Compare this unmixt faith with that which is mixed with corporeal sense, and see the difference. One man believes God loves him, and leans too much to his prosperous state of health, liberty, and the like; another believes and minds not this at all; Oh, what rest hath this last beyond the other! the first is no longer sick, or held under, or like Job, cashiered of all; or, like David, exiled; or, like Paul, imprisoned; but oh, how is he, like David, presently troubled! You might know David's disease by his pulse; "I said in my prosperity, I should never be moved, thou hast made my mountain so strong; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." It is plain he leaned too much on his prosperity. Too many find the same truth by woeful experience; oh, how are they daunted, nay, even dreaded with crosses, losses, and such outward mishaps; nay, often questioning God's love now, which they suspected not before! and as such changes are frequent, so vexations, distractions, and agonies of heart come thick.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF

the other side, look on the unmixed faith, such as Job's he would trust though he were killed; see how still he is the while his sad messengers follow one another at the heels "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord," is all the disquiet he shews; nay, the Lord affirms his temper to be such, that in all that change *Job sinned not*. Jonah cannot lose a gourd, but he frets as if he were undone, whilst Job sits still with the loss of all; Paul and Silas sing in prison, while their sides are torn with whips; Peter's heart is at his mouth when Christ speaks of the Jews cruelty, and out of fear tempts Christ, for which he was well reprehended for his labour. I will give but one instance suiting with the times. Suppose two persons believe God's goodness to restore liberty to his church: the one hath his eye too busy on the means, suppose the parliament; the other only on Christ's love to it, and the faithfulness of his promises of this nature. Now see the difference of the quiet rest of these two; the first, how anxiously solicitous is he for daily news! how disquieted if he cannot hear! how dejected and daunted if suspicions be but whispered! and how dead his heart, even as Nabal's, if such a hopeful means be frustrated and dissolved! Like David, as you heard before, when Saul had haunted him out of all his holes, there is no hope left then, he shall perish. But on the other side, he that hath both feet on Christ, hath as much joy as the other in the prosperous success of fair means, and is moderate in his enquiry; his copyhold is not touched if the means fail; his footing is fast still, and therefore his heart stands fast. See an excellent instance like this in Mordecai, when the Jews were in a desperate case, the decree being gone out; Hester, the queen, was a likely means, as he tells her, to compass the deliverance; "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Therefore he makes use of her, but yet he leaned not to her; for he tells her, that if she *altogether held her peace at this time*, yet *enlargement and deliverance should arise to the Jews from another place*. Such know, that God hath a thousand ways to make good his word which they know not of, and therefore are no more troubled at the breaking of one string than he that hath a dozen more to his bow. Such was Abraham's quietness and rest, when thousands would almost have broke their hearts with the task God set him; but he looked on this, that God was able, (though he knew not how) to raise him [his

Isaac] from the dead again : the like difference may be seen betwixt such as mingle natural reason with faith, and those that banish it. See this difference between Moses and Abraham ; the former is passionate, and speaks unadvisedly, the other staggers not. The same difference may as plainly be seen betwixt such as trust only in the name of the Lord, without regard to the presence or absence of spiritual experiences, and those that consult with them. How common is it to see the latter sort roaring for disquietness, breaking forth into pitiful agonies, not only for the sinfulness of the defects and failings they are conscious of, which is requisite, but with distractive fears of God's utter departure from them : oh, what a mountainous task is it to settle and quiet such people again ! In brief, the ebbings of their unsettled restless spirits, are double to the flowings of their comforts : nay, the still water of their spiritual rest is but for a moment in a manner, the least wind of failing (if their hearts be tender) sets them trembling like aspen leaves ; and because such blasts of failings are as frequent as the stirring of some winds, they have as little rest as such leaves : but if a soul build on the rock alone, looking always upwards for security, neglecting experiences for such an use as to prop up faith, the Lord must sink before they reel ; he must crack under them, before their hearts rise to their mouths : he must call in again what hath gone out of his mouth, and unseal what he hath sealed, before they will suspect their titles to him and his promises ; in a word, he must change, before they can be made to believe, that they shall be consumed. These sleep securely, whilst others, poring on present storms with half-dead hearts, look every moment for swallowing up. What a blessedness were it to a soul to be so thoroughly resolved when all conspire against it, and come with open mouth upon it, and yet it stands still and sees the salvation of the Lord ? Certainly such establishment is not to be had, but where men believe without fetching their corner-stones from sensible experiences.

2. In such an unmixed faith, refined from sense, there is a transcendent blessedness in regard of the more abundant glory such a believing soul brings unto God. You know that speech, "It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive." Now, although properly and really we cannot give God any thing, all being his due, yet he is pleased to account the glorifying of

him a *giving of glory to him*, which he takes more kindly than men do the greatest gifts given to them. See this fully cleared, in an instance fit for our purpose, in Abraham, when God promised him a son by Sarah; observe his faith, how abstracted it was from sense: "He considered not his own body now dead, and so staggered not at the promise, but gave glory to God." If any ask what glory such an abstracted faith gives to God? I answer,

(1.) It gives him the glory of his absolute independent power; it makes the world to see that they care not for any the least coadjutors to help him out with his own work. This glory did the three children, in Daniel, give God, which wrought strangely on that heathen king; "We are careless (say they) to answer thee in this matter; our God is able to deliver us;" whereas a faith mixed with sense robs him wonderfully of his glory, as I might easily shew, but it is too obvious.

(2.) It gives him the glory of his faithfulness and truth, by shewing to the world that he is so good, that they care not for the best security in the world to be bound with him when he hath but passed his word. You know, that among men it makes much for a man's credit, that his word only will be taken for great sums, and further security is despised; so doth this taking God's word only, much advance his credit in the world. Christ inveighs bitterly against that adulterous generation that did seek a sign; intimating, how much they endeavoured to impair his credit, that he could not be credited without a pawn. Paul, by this faith, gives this glory to God; *I know whom I have trusted*, (saith he) that is, I know he will keep touch.

On the other side, where faith hunts after sense, how pitifully is God robbed of his faithfulness? When men are not well, except they have two strings to their bow, is it not manifest they suspect one? When men cannot sleep if they have but a man's own bond, do they not account such a one of small credit? and is not this a wounding him in his reputation, especially if they make it public? I might instance in many other particulars, wherein this single eye of faith glorifies God, which is the greatest blessedness to a soul upon earth; nay, it shall be the greatest blessedness in heaven to glorify him there.

(3.) In such an unmixed faith there is a great blessedness, in regard of the more abundant and comfortable fruition of the

things so believed. The more and more abundant fruition of things promised, you grant, doth cause the more abundant blessedness. Now consider what abundant fruition this faith hath beyond a mixed faith. You know that frequent reply of our Saviour, to such as came out of need to him; "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." But more especially,

1. They that have the unmixed faith, possess good things promised more firmly and securely than such as have a mixed faith. A mixed faith hath the fruition of the promises but by halves: in their own eye they possess but as tenants at will; I mean as such, who look and fear to be turned out again at every manifestation of displeasure: yea, and often, through such suspicion, are turned out, and left harbourless; whereas the unmixed faith possesseth things promised as a freeholder does his estate, wherein his propriety is unchangeable: though the Lord's displeasure grieve him, yet he suspects not dispossession, his title being as sound and good as he can make it. Thus doth a single faith possess promises.

2. They possess things promised far sooner than the other: for no sooner see they the conveyance, but they take possession presently, before they reap the crop: as Christ said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad." He took possession of Christ so soon as he found him promised. On the other side, a mixed faith stays a great deal longer, and hath no possession till the bird be in the hand; promises to such, are like birds in the air or bush, until they be fulfilled; they cannot comfortably say, Such a promise is my own, till they have tasted and drank of it.

3. They possess far more good things promised than the other. More for kind, and more for measure. Where sense is made a support of faith, it oft leaves faith fast in the mire. Now, where faith fails, accomplishment of promises fails. On the other hand, where faith leans not at all on the adventitious succour of sensible experiences, though they fail with respect to the fulfilling of such or such, or their fulfilling in such a measure, yet faith fails not, but applies the promises, and enjoys the things promised.

S E R M O N X L I V .

CHRIST THE CHIEFEST AND FIRST MERCY.

ROMANS viii. 32.

HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP
FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT, WITH HIM, ALSO FREELY
GIVE US ALL THINGS ?

THE apostle having, in the whole foregoing discourse, excellently amplified the large spiritual privileges of Christ's members, conveyed by his Spirit unto them, now in the closing up of this sweet subject, endeavours to establish and settle the reeling hearts of weak believers, that they might have the more joy in believing. This he doth by sundry clear convincing arguments. The first is in the precedent verse, taken from the security which God's presence and side-taking with them, gives, in respect of his being infinitely too hard for whatever may oppose them. The second argument is in my text ; where you may consider, (1.) The *argutum*. (2.) The *argumentum* ; that is, the thing he would make good and clear, and the argument he useth for that purpose. The thing he would clear is, the certainty of future supply of whatever is needful, in the last clause. The argument to prove this is *a majori*, namely, a far greater mercy than all that which is to follow already bestowed in the former clause ; which is a determining argument indeed ; it is like this ; he that hath given a man a field, how can he deny him a bush in it to stop a gap ? Only there is an infinite disproportion between the things in this and the apostle's argument. The sum of the argument is, that Christ, the Son of God, is the dearest thing in the world in his Father's eye ; if ever he would have stuck at any thing, or been loath to part with it, here he would have stopped and made a stand, when he was to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin ; all things else being inconsiderable with God in comparison

of him, who was daily his delight, his beloved in whom he was well pleased. But now having broke through this iron gate, as I may say, or so undauntedly waded through such a bottomless deep as this is, all other passages must needs prove but shallows to him, where he need not put off any thing to get over. In delivering up his Son for sinners, he was fain to put off all he could possibly put off, and strip himself as naked as could be; in all other passages of mercy, God walks dry-shod, as I may say, only here he wades. An admirable argument it is to silence the strongest objections of the most subtilized spirit, prompted with the acutest sophistry of hell; (for the devil suggests tormenting wit enough to rack the afflicted soul.)

That which we will observe out of this golden sentence of scripture, is, 1. That God bestows Christ himself, the chiefest of all his mercies, first unto sinful men. 2. That all other mercies necessarily follow, Christ once given to men. In handling the first, I shall endeavour to make clear unto you, 1. That Christ himself is the chiefest of all God's mercies bestowed on sinners. 2. How he is said to be the first of them. 3. The end, or reason, why he bestows him first: all which will make excellent way for a profitable and comfortable application of the point in hand, whereby, I hope, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

I will begin with the first, to make it clear unto you, that Christ himself, bestowed on sinners, is the chiefest of all God's mercies to them; the strength of the apostle's arguments lies in this; this will appear fully, if you consider, (1.) Christ given, as he stands in relation to God the Father who bestows him. (2.) The value of the gift; what Christ is worth that is bestowed. (3.) The usefulness of this gift to those to whom he is given. (4.) The manner how he is bestowed on sinners.

1. I say, Christ bestowed will appear to be, by far, the chiefest of all mercies, if you consider Christ given as he stands in relation to the Father giving him. Mercies, you know, are greater or less, as the giver is more or less interested and endeared in what he gives; the nearer and dearer any thing is to the giver, the greater price is put on the gift in his parting therewith: as you know, a kingdom being of nearer and dearer concernment to a king, than a cast of his countenance, or such like, the giving of the one is a greater gift, than the cast of the other; and, if he have nothing dearer than it, the gift thereof must be the chiefest

of gifts from him : this illustration will give some light to our purpose ; Christ given to sinners, is the nearest and dearest thing in the world to the Father ; he is his Son, his begotten Son, his only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased. Thus he stands in relation to him, 1. As the second person, being equally God with himself. 2. As he is *Θεογενῆτος*, God and man in one person, the mediator of the covenant : “ To which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son ? ” Heb. i. 5. So also is he the nearest and dearest to the Father of all things in the world besides ; no creature so like God as he : the apostle calls him the “ Brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” Heb. i. 3 ; no creature advancing God in the world as he, none compassing his great ends as he, so pure and conformable to his mind as he ; he is the first-born of many brethren, the heir of all things, the co-worker with God in the framing and managing of all things, to whom God gave all power both in heaven and in earth. Now, what can be found in the world so near, so dear to God, as this Christ ? All other things of God, are of far inferior rank to him, whether thrones, dominions, or angels, they are not daily his delight as the Son is : in parting therefore with this his Son, and not sparing him, but delivering him up, he parted with the nearest and dearest thing he had, and therefore, he must needs be the chiefest of all his mercies to sinners ; not only the chiefest he hath bestowed, but also the chiefest he could, having no better thing to bestow.

2. Christ given will appear to be the chiefest of mercies, if you consider the value and worth of Christ himself bestowed. Mercies are not only rated according to their esteem, but also their value and greatness of worth. Affection or fancy may make mean things of high esteem, but where there is real worth, as well as high esteem, in gifts bestowed, this adds much to the greatness of them : now for Christ, he hath more real worth than all the world besides ; and this is plain, because when weighed in the balance with divine justice, it was found too light to counterpoise it ; all together could not make up the full sum or value that should satisfy that : no man, nor all creatures, could make an agreement for man ; it must cost more to redeem a soul ; but Christ could and did pay the utmost farthing. He is a mass of treasure big enough ; the travail of his soul did *atify* ; therefore the church might well call him, *The chiefest*

among ten thousand; and St. Peter calls his blood *precious blood*: in that therefore, Christ alone, and nothing else, amounted to such an infinite value, he may well go for the chiefest of God's mercies, being bestowed on sinners.

3. If you will consider the usefulness of Christ, to those on whom he is bestowed. Nothing in the world, nay, all the world could be nothing so useful to sinners as he is. Without him, all our souls had been lost for ever; "And what profit is there in gaining the whole world, and losing them?" Mercy is valued as it stands a man in stead, and serves his turn: things of value may in some cases be useless, when things of little value may be precious, as bread to the hungry will do more good than a mouthful of gold for that purpose; that indeed is the chiefest mercy, that will do a man most good; now, what is so useful, or can do a man that good, that Christ can? What, but he, can reconcile God to man, ingratiate man with God, pay all his debts to him, make all things work together for good, heal all the agonies, torments, and horrors of spirit, suck out the suffocating venom of corruptions, vanquish sin, death, and hell, raise the mouldered carcase from corruption to incorruption, and invest it with a state of eternal glory, in the highest heavens; wiping all tears from the eyes, and filling with fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore at his right-hand, in that kingdom which shall never fade? There is nothing, except Christ, but is dry to many purposes, and leaves men destitute; he only can abundantly satisfy, and filleth all in all; therefore he is the chiefest of all mercies.

4. Christ is the chiefest of mercies, in regard of the manner of bestowing him. Not any of all God's mercies strained him, (if I may so speak by an anthropopathy) as the making Christ so useful a mercy as he is, or costs Christ so dear. Other mercies God gives, and there is no more ado but giving and taking; but, before Christ could be such a mercy as he is, the Father must bruise him, and take pleasure in it; give him the bitter cup of his indignation, and be inexorable to his strong cries; nay, withdraw himself, and forsake him in his sorest conflicts. Christ also must endure an exinanition of his divine glory, and bear an eclipse of that excellent majesty; he must strip himself of all repute and esteem in the world, be despised and rejected of men, and become a man of sorrows, and ac

quainted with griefs ; be mocked, scourged, crucified, and slain by miscreants ; yea, wrestle with the wrath of his Father, even as much as all the sins of his believing people deserved : “ The Lord must lay on him the iniquity of us all,” and proportion his wrath thereunto, that “ by his stripes we might be healed.” All this stir, and a great deal more there must be, before this mercy in Christ could be ripe and fit for our use : so that here is not only Christ given, but prepared in such a manner for our good, as that it is hard to say, whether the substance, or the circumstances, contain the greater mercy. It is certain, that no other mercies cost the Father of Christ himself so dear. All which particulars put together, shew how far this mercy in giving Christ thus, exceeds all other mercies, and by far the chiefest.

Come we now to consider, how Christ is said to be the first of all mercies God bestows on sinners. That he is so, is plain in the text ; having (to wit already) “ Not spared him, how shall he not give all things ?” Intimating, that other things remain to be given, when he is given.

1. Christ is the first, “ As all things were made for him,” as the apostle tells us, Col. i. 16, that is, for his sake, as well as use ; so that all the creatures in the world are indebted to Christ for their being : had it not been for him, nothing had been made. God’s love is primarily fixed on Christ, and on the creature through him ; as through Christ he takes content therein, and gives content to him thereby ; especially his love to man originally runs through Christ, not only to create him such as he is, above all other creatures, but also from all eternity to elect him to eternal glory. The apostle tells us, that *we are elected in Christ, all Christ’s delights being with the sons of men*, Prov. viii. 30, 31. And Christ himself being daily the delight of the Father, it pleased the Father for the satisfying of Christ’s desire, to make the sons of men his delight also. Thus you may understand that voice from heaven, Matt. iii. 17, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ;” that is, I am well pleased with believers, for to them I conceive the word *well-pleased* is to be referred ; his well-pleasedness to his Son being sufficiently expressed in the word *well beloved* : God would never have cared for man, especially as a sinful wretch, but in and for his Son. Thus Christ is the first mercy bestowed

on man, as he is the first, nay, sole moving cause to stir bowels in God to him. But, 2. and principally, Christ is the first mercy, (not in respect of common, but spiritual mercies) not only as a mover to other mercies, but as God doth actually convey Christ himself first, before he conveys any mercy: he gives sinners a full interest and propriety in him, before he shews any special love to them; he makes Christ himself first thine and mine, before he pours out, or sheds abroad his love in the heart, or communicates any sanctifying grace, comfort, or spiritual privileges whatsoever; this you shall see fully cleared by the prophet, Isa. ch. xlii. 6, 7, who brings in the Lord speaking thus to Christ, "I will give thee for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison." First he gives Christ, then afterwards he opens the blind eyes by him; and he doth not first loose the prisoners, and then give Christ; but first gives him, and then loosens them by him. The like, or rather the same expression, this prophet useth, chap. xlix. 8. St. Peter, speaking of Christ as he is mentioned, Psa. cxviii. tells us, that "coming to him as unto a living stone, we also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. 4, 5. Men *in the day of God's power are made willing to come first to Christ*, then grow up and do acceptable service by him: learn this well, for it is of great use, as you shall hear before we have done: only let us first consider the last thing propounded, Why God gives Christ first, before other mercies?

1. That we may be more fully assured and satisfied, that he will not withhold succeeding mercies; this is the main reason why the apostle mentions it in this place. God knows how apt we are, upon every surmise, or at the least slip, and his withdrawing awhile, to be full of jealousies and sad doubts, that now "He will be gracious no more, and hath shut up his loving kindness for ever in displeasure," as Asaph pitifully complains in his doubting humour. For this cause God at first leaves a pledge, or hostage in our hands, that looking thereon, it may check our suspicions, and put us in mind, that whatever thing it is we suspect he will not grant, we may see we have in possession from him already, that which is of far greater value than what we now pursue. He deals, as able men do with suspicious

creditors, who leave pawns of greater value than what they owe, which may pay all that is behind, that so poor souls may be at rest.

2. Christ himself is the first mercy, (I mean still when God effectually calls a sinner) because, Christ is the soul to animate, or the principle of all spiritual life and motion, and therefore he must be first given, or else there can be no such life; as a dead body must first have a soul infused into it before it can live: when God had formed Adam's body, *He breathed into him the breath of life* (that is, a soul) *and then he became a living soul*, or person. You know, when a soul is separated from a body, the body is a lifeless carcase: now, that Christ is this soul or principle of spiritual life, is most plain, in that he calls himself *the life*, John xiv. 6, and tells us, chap. vi. 33, that he *gives life to the world*, and chap. x. 10, "I am come (saith he) that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly:" and Paul saith, "I now live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Hence it is that Christ is called the head of the body, because all the animal, sensitive spirits, which actuate the whole body with sense and motion, flow thence as from a fountain; intimating Christ to be the spring of all spiritual understanding and activity: for the same cause he is called the root, which is to the tree as the soul to the body, and the foundation on which the house rests for support and stability, and therefore is first laid; before men attempt to raise any building. All this evinceth the silliness of imagining there can be any work of grace in a heart, before Christ himself be given or received, who brings all that is, or can be, along with himself, and finds nothing but a dead carcase as unto spiritual activity when he comes. For this, Christ is also called the everlasting Father, for that *we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*; now you know there must be a father present to beget, before there can be a son begotten.

3. Again, Christ must be first given, because he is the prince, or prime author and principal worker of peace; so the word prince signifies; *He is our peace*, saith the apostle, Eph. ii. 14, which caused the choir of angels at his incarnation, and coming to dwell among men, to proclaim, "Peace on earth, and goodwill towards men:" now you know, that all grace from God follows peace with him; he first must be reconciled before he

will shew kindness ; therefore the apostle tells us, that “ God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses,” 2 Cor. v. 19 ; first reconciled, then he forgives sin ; and this order he observes in Christ ; he must therefore first come and settle a peace, before there can be hoped any fruit or manifestation of his gracious love.

Use 1. Come we now to application ; If Christ be the chiefest of all God’s mercies, then let Christ himself be chiefest in your pursuit. Men usually aim at the best of things, as near as they can reach ; the best wives, servants, grounds ; if any thing be better than other, that is meat for their mouths ; he that contents himself with the refuse of things, it is because he can go no higher. Christ, as you have heard, is the chiefest and best of all God’s mercies, therefore single him out from other things, and press hard after him. The prophet, Isa. lv. 2, 3, hath a notable expostulation to this purpose ; “ Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfies not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself with fatness ;” all other things are not bread, in comparison of Christ ; they are lean, dry things to him, who is oily fatness : O you that *cumber yourselves about many things*, like Martha, that waste and tire yourselves, that set thoughts and cares on tenter-hooks, to compass a little muck, or spot of earth, you labour for that which satisfies not ; (say, are you satisfied ?) Mary hath chosen the better part in sticking close to Christ. Paul saw so much pre-eminence in Christ, that, learned as he was, he *desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified* ; nay, he *desires to be dissolved to be with him* ; and so would you, if so be you could but taste, that is, believe, how good the Lord is. *None but Christ, none but Christ*, wouldst thou then say, as the martyr at the stake ; *How much better is thy love than wine ! silver and gold are not to be compared with him*, say all they that have found him. He is the treasure hid in the field, the jewel above price : wilt thou then sweat and melt thyself in following a vein of clay, when a mine of the richest gold, and of diamonds, is in thine eye ? Wilt thou glean after a churl that hath raked his field, when thou mayest be allowed to carry whole sheaves, nay, shocks, away at once ? Wilt thou glean for fitches, when thou mayest glean pure

wheat? Wilt thou cast thyself on a poor beggar, when the king will take pleasure in thy beauty? Shall the treacherous world have all thy kisses and embraces, whilst Christ stands at the door and knocks? Oh, come to thyself, poor soul, (the Lord in mercy awaken thee; nay, quicken thee, that thou mayest) and think what a game is in chace; savoury meat indeed, such as thy soul will be satisfied with, when thou hast tasted; and lose not this present advantage to hunt after butterflies like silly children, which when they are enjoyed are poor nothings, yea, take their wings and fly away.

Use 2. If Christ be the first of all mercies, then they begin at the wrong end of the bottom, that think to wind any graces from God first, and then seek after Christ: and therefore no marvel if they make nothing of their work, but turn and toss, and make many a stop and broken end: whoever will go smoothly on, and make good riddance, must begin here at the right end, and get Christ himself, before ever they expect to be a jot better than corrupt nature makes them: who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Beloved, you may pump at your own hearts until you break them, before you can fetch up a drop of grace, (so dry are they) unless Christ himself be first poured in; as you will first pour in a bucket of water into a dry pump, before you will essay to draw up water: many poor souls lie hacking and hewing with their own blunt and dull spirits, to grub up their tough corruptions; they plough with a wooden coulter and shear, to turn up the clods of their fallow hearts; or rather put a dead horse to tear them up, whilst they toil in their own strength: you must first get your spirits keened by Christ; when men begin to plough up their hearts, they plough upon rocks, and therefore Christ must come first and soften them, before you can so much as enter; it pities me to see how many poor souls are ignorant in this spiritual husbandry, and therefore toil to no purpose: is it not madness to begin to rear a roof first, and hope that then the foundation will be laid sure, but not otherwise; I mean, to erect a structure of grace, and then go downward to lay Christ the foundation? Alas! poor creatures, how will they get up, unless they lay Christ the foundation first, and by him go upward? he brings faith itself along with him; men do not get faith first and then Christ, but he brings it himself: learn this point well. The apostle tells us expressly, that he is the

author as well as finisher of our faith, by whom we believe ; and again he tells us, that *faith is the operation of God*.

You will say, how can a man apply Christ without faith.

I answer, He cannot ; but yet faith comes not before Christ, but he comes and brings it, and delivers it to the soul, whereby it takes him present. I cannot illustrate this better to you, than by Jeremy's getting out of the dungeon*. Ebedmelech (a type of Christ) comes from the king to Jeremiah being sunk into the mire of the dungeon, and brings cords and soft rags with him ; these he lets down into the dungeon to him, and bids him put the rags under his arm-holes, fastening them to the cords ; which he did, holding the cords fast : then Ebedmelech herewith drew him forth. Now the cords came not before Ebedmelech, neither did he draw himself to Ebedmelech with them ; but he brought them, and drew him up by them unto himself. Ebedmelech represents Christ, the cords and rags faith, Jeremy the convert, or saved sinner, the dungeon the deep pit of sinfulness and misery in which he sticks ; Christ brings faith, and gives one end to a sinner to hold fast by, and keeps the other end in his own hand, and so draws the sinner towards him, who comes by the holdfast of the cord immediately ; but originally, and principally, by the strength of Christ's own arm. In brief, you must conceive Christ graciously present whenever faith is : now, if faith itself, the radical grace, come not before Christ, much less other graces that spring from it. The apostle tells us, from Christ, that *we are sanctified by faith*, and that *faith purifies the heart* : do not, therefore, put the cart before the horse, nor foolishly think to draw the horse with the cart. Some say, We thought that we must first be humbled, changed, renewed, and then come to Christ : I confess too many go backward in this manner, and catch many a fall and bruise ; I would we had not some blind leaders of such blind, who are both like to fall into the ditch ; have I not cleared the contrary way to you by manifest scripture ? I come not to you in my own name about this business.

You will say, until there be some such good beginning, I shall stink in Christ's nostrils with my filth and rottenness.

But, you must know, that Christ comes and justifies the ungodly ; he doth not find them godly, or stay till they be,

* Jer. xxxviii. 11.

before he justifies them ; but takes them as they are, ungodly, and justifies them then. As the father of the prodigal stays not until his tattered lousy son had shifted himself, and washed off his filth, but sees him afar off, falls on his neck presently, and kisses him, then calls for the best robe and covers his nakedness: a notable parable, whereby Christ sets himself forth to poor sinners. Christ is not so squeamish as men are, nor doth he affect as men do, who look for comeliness or loveliness to stir their affections. Ah! do not then stumble at straws, and make bug-bears to fright thyself from coming to Christ; they are none of his setting up: if ever you partake of any spiritual mercies, whether of grace or comfort, you must begin with Christ himself first.

What is it to take Christ first ? may some say.

I answer, When God opens the heart, as he did the heart of Lydia whilst Paul preached the gospel (and as it may be he doth of some now) to come to thyself, and sadly to think that thy present way is not right, and that there will be bitterness in the end of it ; and, therefore, thy heart is fully resolved to turn over a new leaf, let it cost what it will ; when thy heart thus checks and spurs at once, then without any more ado, seal the covenant with Christ ; take him with all that he is, and hath, for thine own ; though thy hands be never so foul, stay not the wiping of them, but take him unworthy as thou art : he will then wash and make thee clean himself. Do not stumble at this, it is not too good to be true : it is ratified in heaven, and proclaimed in the gospel ; “ When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live : I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine,” Ezeek. xvi. 6—8.

I say, as before, when thy heart is opened, then pray for faith to look unto Christ, that so after-thoughts of returning from backslidings may have life and power from him, and be backed by him ; then are they like to prosper, else they will prove but faint velleities, or like the early dew, and become but a flashing spiritual qualm : but having, at the first dash, committed yourself and change to Christ's management, he will go through perfectly with it, and make good riddance indeed ; for *the pleasure of the Lord*, on thy heart and life, *shall prosper in his hands*. And therefore it is a foul slanderous calumny, cast by

ignorant, if not malicious hearts, on this sweet gospel, to say it makes void the law, and opens a gap to licentiousness. For nothing establisheth the law like it, or binds souls to good behaviour, as it doth: as you may see by the little hint I gave you even now. If you go this way to work, to begin with Christ himself, you may plough with his heifer, and so untie many a riddle, that will else puzzle your brains; by this means you shall have a strong and impregnable hold to retreat unto upon every occasion of danger: you shall carry a spring of *aqua vitæ* about you always, against faintings; you shall have a wise counsellor to direct you, or a north-star in your eye, by which you may steer your course; a mighty champion, not only to order, but also to fight your battles, whilst you may *stand still and see the salvation of the Lord*. By this means you shall never repent of your leaving Egypt, though you come to straits; for this angel of the covenant, going before you, shall level your way, and make it smooth, shall scatter and tread down the mighty that come against you; shall still and quiet the jealous risings of your heart, and so feed you with present earnest and first-fruits, as shall draw you on with a longing, until you attain the full possession both of grace and glory. *You have run well*, saith Paul to the Galatians, speaking of the times when they embraced Christ first without works. There is no such progress in holiness, as where Christ enters and sets a soul at work, who oils the wheels, who fills the sails with a full and prosperous gale.

SERMONS XLV.—XLVIII.

FREE GRACE THE TEACHER OF GOOD WORKS

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, WHICH BRINGETH SALVATION, HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN; TEACHING US, THAT DENYING UN-GODLINESS, AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY IN THIS PRESENT WORLD.

BELOVED, *I am jealous over you, with a holy jealousy*, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, lest, after the sweet invitations and wooings of you in Christ's name, that you might be espoused unto him; lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, namely, bewitching her to a presumptuous licentious adventuring on God's gentleness, whilst she tasted the forbidden fruit; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; namely, by presuming too much upon him, and adventuring to continue in sin, in hope that grace may abound: for the prevention of which dangerous miscarriage, which hath been the unhappy lot of many thousands, I thought good to step in with this text, which I am persuaded will prove a seasonable warning to some at least. It is a reason, or argument, whereby the apostle Paul enforceth and strengtheneth what he had formerly delivered, having given proper rules unto several distinct offices and ranks of persons, as ministers, ch. i; aged men, ch. ii. 2; aged women, ver. 3; young women, ver. 4, 5; young men, ver. 6; to Titus himself, ver. 7, 8; and to servants, ver. 9, 10; in all which he suits his doctrine to their several conditions. Now that these several precepts might receive entertainment, he tells them, that God therefore manifested his grace that brings salvation.

In the words themselves there are two general things observ-

able: (1.) The free bountiful love of God unto man, ver. 11. (2.) The end of this love, ver. 12. In the former observe, 1st, The fruits of his love, or the thing wherein he manifests it, salvation. 2d. The cause of it, the grace of God bringeth it. 3d. The means of participating thereof, appearance. 4th. The persons to whom it is manifested, to all men.

The end of this love of God, here expressed in general, is our sanctification, consisting of two branches, mortification and renovation: mortification is here specified under two heads, answering the two tables of the law; the first is an abnegation of ungodliness, which comprehends the branches of the first table; the second is a denial of worldly lusts, which comprehends the branches of the second table. The second branch of the end of the grace of God, is renovation, specified under three heads; the first respects a man's self, *he must live soberly*; the second respects our neighbours, *righteously or justly*; the third respects God, *godly*. This end is amplified in two ways; 1. From the means of attaining it, the teaching that the grace of God brings with it. 2. The time it teacheth, and we must put this end to practice, *in this present world*. From the former part of the text observe, that it is the grace of God appearing, which bringeth salvation to all men.

This doctrine being the corner-stone of the whole gospel, and the rock whereon the anchor of faith must fasten, to preserve the soul and body from shipwreck, (for so indeed it is) had need be handled warily and soundly; for an error in the foundation is of far greater consequence than in the superstructure, wherein I shall endeavour to be as cautious as may be; and, because it is the well-spring of comfort, and the grand charter that comprehends all our prerogatives, which have their dependence hereon, I will labour to make it as plain and manifest as may be; to this purpose some particulars are to be discussed for the unveiling of their obscurity; as, 1. What is meant by the grace of God. 2. What the appearing of it is. 3. What it is for this grace appearing to bring salvation. 4. Unto whom it brings salvation.

1. Grace, in the scripture, is diversely taken; sometimes it signifies *comeliness*, or that which makes a thing illustrious; so Solomon useth the word, "My son, hear the instructions of thy father, for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy *nead*,"

Prov. i. 8, 9, chap. iii. 22, chap. iv. 9, but so it is not here taken : sometimes divine qualities in a believer ; so the apostle takes it when he saith, “ You abound in every thing, in faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love ; so abound in this grace also,” 2 Cor. viii. 1—4, 5, 6, 7, speaking of liberality. And thus grace and works are all one, and therefore this cannot be the grace here mentioned, by which we are to be saved ; for the apostle opposeth these two, “ By grace ye are saved, not of works,” Eph. ii. 9. Sometimes, again, grace signifies free unmerited favour, which hath no other impulsive or moving cause, but only the good pleasure of God’s will, Eph. i. 5, 6, and so it is taken as oft as grace and works are opposed ; thus the apostle expounds the meaning of grace, “ Being justified freely by his grace,” Rom. iii. 24, and thus we are to understand it in the text ; sometimes (for a punctual illustration of it) grace signifies that good pleasure of God’s will, which is revealed in the gospel ; as it is recorded of Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 3,) when they preached the gospel at Iconium ; *the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace* ; so Paul commends the elders *to the word of his grace*, chap. xx. 32, which is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance ; and so it is opposed to the rigour and severity of the law, which stands on these terms, *Do this and live* ; which yet is the good pleasure of his will. Finally, the grace of God is taken most strictly for the free favour of God revealed in the gospel, appointing Christ his Son to compass our justification, sanctification, and redemption : for this cause it is that the grace of God is so oft called the “ Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet. i. 10, 11—13, because through him “ we have access to the grace wherein we stand,” and this comes to us by him, according to that of John, (John i. 14, 15—17,) “ Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The sum of all is this, it is the mere free motion of God’s own will and pleasure, to shew undeserved favour ; for, by Christ, this is the sole fountain from whence, as all other our comforts which go before, so this last in special of salvation, flows. Whatever is annexed thereto, as an adjuvant cause, is so far from helping, as it makes void the efficacy of this, whereof I shall speak more fully hereafter.

2. This appearance of grace, or free kindness, and love of God our Saviour, for our reconciliation and salvation, “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy

nath he saved us," Tit. iii. 4, 5, is nothing else but the bringing of the same to light, or a making of it manifest; which that you may the more fully understand, note, That the appearance or manifestation of God's grace, and free favour, is to be considered two ways, 1. When it is made visible and discernible. 2. When it is actually seen and discerned. In the first consideration it appears in the gospel published, wherein all may find this favour; and thus it is apparent even to such as shut their eyes and turn from it; and of this manifestation Christ speaks, saying, "Light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light," John iii. 19; even as a king's mind and pleasure is apparent, when it is extant in his statutes, proclamations, and charters, though some men will not regard it. But this is not all the appearance of the grace of God that brings salvation, although without this it could never have been found; it must not only be visible, but also actually discerned.

Now the grace of God in Christ is actually discerned two ways, 1. By a mere intellectual perception or vision. 2. By a cordial apprehension thereof. It appears by an intellectual perception, when men understand the freeness of God's grace or bounty aright; what it is which is only an appearance to the knowledge, which, by the common principles of natural reason, is attainable where the gospel is published; for when any rational man hears plain sense, he may easily understand it, and perceive the meaning of it: in this sense the grace of God appears unto all attentive persons that have the use of reason; thus it appeared to the Pharisees, for had they not understood what Christ meant, when he taught this free grace of God by himself, they would never have raged so against him; for distaste always presupposeth some foreknowledge; had he spoke altogether beyond their understanding, they could not have conceived any cause of indignation; this, therefore, is not the appearing of grace here intended; for, instead of bringing salvation, it became an occasion of their farther condemnation. It is the cordial manifestation and apprehension of the free grace of God, understood aright, that was manifested in the gospel, that brings salvation; and then the grace of God appears, when God opens the heart, and sets up the lustre of it there, with such a clear brightness, that it apprehends it as it is.

Now this differs as much, if not more, from a mere intellectual

apprehension, as a blind man's knowledge of the sun, and a good sighted man seeing of it with his eyes: a blind man may know, by discourse, what kind of thing the sun is, but he cannot be certain whether there is such a thing or no; but he that hath a cordial apprehension of free grace, is as sure there is such a thing as he that sees the sun, I mean out of the case of desertion. But, more particularly, the appearing of free grace to the heart, is such a manifestation thereof, as leaves its own savouriness there, and so enamours it with the excellency and usefulness thereof, to supply its own overgrown defects, that it pants after a propriety therein as the dearest thing in the world; it sees so much in this grace, as that it concludes it to be the one thing necessary, and is willing to embrace it upon any terms; such a winning appearance, which enters into the soul that brings salvation; for then the soul makes after it, and is not at rest till he closes with it: for this is the end God aims at, in proclaiming and delineating his free grace to the view of the world, to draw men to a love and desire of it; and therefore, to whomsoever he intends to communicate it, he persuades the heart so effectually, that it cannot choose but be ravished with the glorious and comfortable appearance of it. So that salvation then comes to a man's heart, when the free love of God in Christ appears so lovely and useful, as that all the things in the world seem but as dross and dung in comparison of it; and therefore nothing is desired and prized like unto it; for then, and only then, it appears in its own lively colours as it is; when thus much is not seen in it, the main of it is yet hid, and appears not. There are many in the world who understand the meaning of the doctrine of free grace, yet see but the shell of it, no beauty nor savouriness in it, and therefore in heart say of it, as the strangers to the church concerning Christ, the subject of free grace, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" So they say of free grace, What is in this doctrine more than in ordinary matters of discourse? But the church herself sees more in him, and in it, and says, "My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand." Thus free grace appeared unto Paul, "But what things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ; yea, (saith he,) doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and count them but dung that I may win him," Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but

that which is through the faith of Christ." The same apostle tells us, "That in the ages to come, (to such as by grace should be saved,) God would shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ."

3. What is this salvation which the grace of God appearing brings? To understand it aright, note, that this word is diversely taken in scripture, sometimes it signifies deliverance out of temporal dangers and afflictions, so Psal. lxxiv. 12, "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." Sometimes Christ himself, as Luke i. 69. Zachary sings thus, "God hath raised an horn of salvation in the city of David." So sings old Simeon, chap. ii. 30; "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" having taken Christ up in his arms. Sometimes the whole state of grace, or conversion; so Christ says, speaking of Zaccheus, chap. xix. 9, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." So Paul uses it, Rom. xi. 11, "Salvation is come unto the Gentiles," speaking of the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles. And 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Now is the day of salvation." Sometimes the *blessed estate of the saints in heaven*; Heb. i. 14, "The angels are ministering spirits to such as shall be heirs of salvation;" and in chap. v. 9, when Christ is called, "The Author of eternal salvation." So that salvation is temporal, spiritual, and eternal; all which may be very well understood by it here ascribed to the grace of God appearing; for it is the efficient cause of all; no pply of temporal good comes either by chance, or man's wisdom, dustry, or power, but only from God's free grace and bounty. al. lxxv. 6, 7, "Promotion cometh neither from the East, est, nor South; but God putteth down one, and setteth up another. I will not trust in my bow: it is not my sword that shall save me, but it is thou, (saith David.) Vain is the help of man; a horse is but a vain thing; riches profit not." Psal. iv. 6, "Many say, Who will shew us any good? but, Lord, lift up thou the light of thy countenance upon us." And again, "Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, which hath made heaven and earth." In a word, that all comes by grace, appears in the caution Moses gives Israel in the wilderness; "Speak not in thine heart after the Lord hath cast them out (the Canaanites) saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in, but for the word which the Lord sware unto the fathers," Deut. ix.

4, 5. So likewise the work of conversion, in respect both of justification and sanctification, which are the salvation of God, are of mere grace: the apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 24, "We are justified freely by his grace," not of ourselves, it is the free gift of God; "The free gift is of many offences unto justification," chap. v. 16. Therefore pardon of sins is called forgiveness, which is the free acquitting of a debt, without any payment; and as justification, so sanctification is of grace, or free bounty; so saith Paul of himself, 1 Cor. xv. 10, "By the grace of God I am that I am, and this grace was not bestowed in vain. I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me." Run through the several branches of sanctification, and you may easily find that every particular is begun, continued, and perfected, through the favour and bounty of God in Christ: "My heart and my strength failed me, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," saith David. "To them that have no might he increaseth strength," saith Isaiah. "We are not sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, all our sufficiency is of God," saith Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 5. So likewise Christ our salvation is brought unto us of mere free grace, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given," saith Isaiah, chap. ix. 6. So speaking of that Son, he saith, chap. xlii. 6, "I will give thee for a covenant." So the apostle tells us, Eph. v. 2, that "Christ hath given himself for us," and what is more free than gift. John vi. 51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Finally, eternal salvation is of grace and free bounty, according to that of John, "I give unto them eternal life." Rev. ii. 10, "I will give thee a crown of life." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life." (What of deserts? No.) "But which Christ, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing." Thus you see what the salvation is that grace appearing brings, and that it is all of grace.

4. The last thing considerable in this point is, to whom the grace of God appearing brings salvation, *all men*? Now that you may understand what is meant by all men; note, that the apostle here means not (by all) every particular man in the world; (for it is manifest, that all shall not be saved) but *some*

of all sorts of men, as the coherence plainly shews; for this text is produced as an argument, to enforce or encourage those several ranks and degrees of persons, to wit, ministers, old, young, servants, to have a care to do the several duties pressed on them; the strength of which argument lies in this, that grace brings salvation to the obedient in every rank and degree; even servants and young folk have their share in this grace, as well as ministers and old people. This (all) in scripture is many times interpreted by some (Rev. v. 9, ch. vii. 9,) of all nations, tongues, people, and languages, Jews, Gentiles, bond, free, barbarian, Scythian, and the like. By one Spirit we are all baptized, 1 Cor. xii. 13, "Into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free," Gal. iii. 28; "there is neither Jew, nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; but we are all one in Christ," Col. iii. 11. It were endless at most, as well as needless, to multiply places to this purpose: in a word, therefore, this general phrase of *all men*, must be understood as that passage of Peter, when he saw that Cornelius, a Gentile, with his house received the faith; "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," Acts x. 34, 35. The sum of the point therefore thus opened, is briefly this, the free bounty of God, truly apprehended as it is, brings all good, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, to men of all degrees, ranks, and qualities, that so apprehend it.

From hence you may learn whereunto to trust, and whither to go for all manner of salvation, even this fountain of God's free grace and bounty; all other refuges are but broken cisterns, that cannot hold this water of life. Now, because this is the tree of life, and well-spring of salvation, of which whosoever receiveth is nourished to eternal life; therefore hath Satan ever bestirred all his wit and strength to divert the sons of men from it; some by terror, persuading them they have no part nor portion in this matter, and so drives them away, at least as far as he can possibly keep them off, till the Lord himself break in upon him, defeats him, and so draws them in, and by a holy winning violence fastens this his grace upon them; others he deludes with fantastical dreams, that they are already filled with grace, when they have never yet tasted of it, and persuades them no more to look after it: others again, he deals cunningly withal, (such especially in whom he sees and finds an eager

pursuit of salvation, not to be withstood) and persuades them, that this is too easy a way to be safe, for that salvation is **or** more worth than to be had for nothing; and therefore puts them upon an establishing of their own righteousness, and a purchasing of this salvation, by the works of the law, and by these means gulls many thousand deceived souls; in the mean time, having misused and misled them, he makes himself merry, and laughs at them in his sleeve; for he knows well, so long as he can mislead men out of this path, his prey is sure enough. But, beloved, be not ye children in understanding, seeing the Holy Ghost here teacheth you better; let him not make such fools of you, but put down the bucket of faith, and draw up salvation out of this well of it. This grace is the fountain of living waters, do not trouble yourselves about broken cisterns that will hold no water; suck not at dry breasts, that can give no milk, but at this full breast of consolation. You will say, this spring indeed is comfortable to those, to whom it is set open, but to me it is a fountain sealed up. This is a common objection of many poor souls in desertion, which wonderfully afflicts and torments them; but let me reason with such a while. No man ought to lay an accusation against another, but what he can sufficiently prove, much less against himself; and it is lamentable to see what power Satan hath got over faithful persons, to make them such zealous accusers, and false witnesses, to the overthrowing of themselves, when nature itself, without grace, is so tender of a man's own welfare: but, beloved, you that are so eager in your accusations, and so peremptory, muster up your proofs, and see how you can make this accusation good; you must know, that all proof which is not fetched from the scripture is false, and where can you find one proof there, that this fountain is sealed up unto you? I am sure you do not find your names recorded in God's black book, as I may so call it, of his rejection. But you will say, I find by general descriptions of such to whom God will shew no favour, that these reflect on my condition, and so grace and favour belong not to me, and consequently there is no salvation for me; for I am worse than you think I am, and no unclean thing can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. I answer, if sin can exclude persons from salvation, then who can be saved? *For where is he that liveth and sinneth not?* You will say, **I have**

not only sin in me, but it reigns in me. I answer, it may be in this thou art a false witness against thyself, for many accuse themselves in this particular, who cannot prove it; nay, if they would judge deliberately, upon due search, they must confess the contrary. You will say, it reigns, for I cannot keep it down, but it breaks out in spite of me, do what I can; though I pray against it, and resist it. Will you call this the reigning of sin? Then it reigned in the apostle Paul, when the *good he would do, he could not, and the evil he would not do, that he did*, Rom. vii. Yet he quits himself thus, "It is not I, but sin that dwells in me," and he gives thanks to God for it. Then also sin reigns where the spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit; then it also reigns in all the believers in the world, who in many things sin all. For doubtless they strive against it, and sometimes are foiled; but you must know, that an invading enemy never reigns till the field be quit; nor then neither, so long as new forces are raised, and make a fresh onset. It is not every fall that loseth the victory, much less the fall of some few soldiers, whilst the commander stands his ground; it may be thy mind is taken, and hoodwinked, and some members are led captive to evil; but the commanding will with fightings and denials holds out, and will not yield; here indeed is a loss to be repaired, but not of the battle, so long as the heart remains carefully steadfast, and upright; besides, if the heart with some violent overchargings should be taken, yet it gives the slip, and musters up all its strength again, and falls afresh to combating, the reign of sin is yet prevented. Know, in a word, that as long as souls fight Christ's battles, though they get many a knock, yet they are his warriors, and not under sin's regiment. You will say, but I cannot fight against sin. But, what means then this lowing of the soul, this inward fretting and chafing of spirit, these groans and sighs? Do you call these consent to sin? When Moses came down from the mount, Joshua tells him, that he hears the noise of war in the camp*; but Moses answers him, it is not the noise of them that cry for being overcome, but the voice of them that sing, do I hear. So, I say, frettings and out-cries of heart are the noise of war, but singings and mirth the noise of consent to sin; as the people, when they crowned Solomon king, made great shouts of

* Exod. xxxii. 17, 18.

joy. Moreover, though it be most true, that salvation belongs not to such as give themselves full scope to continue in sin to the end, yet it may belong to one, who at the present is under the full power of sin, otherwise, could no man be saved; for when they are called, God finds them polluted in their blood, and wallowing in their mire; he enters then into covenant with them, and spreads his skirt over them, and they become his, Ezek. xvi. So that man's filthiness is no hindrance of God's gracious call; he justifies the ungodly, or none; for he can find no other on earth. In the text you find, that salvation is brought to all sorts of men; Luke xv. Do but consider the parable of the prodigal, the most lively picture of a convert; his father sees him first, nay, the consideration of a father, who hath enough, when he is ready to starve, is the first moving cause of his returning, though he had run riot, and therefore might justly expect nothing but severity. "The Lord will wait that he may be gracious unto thee, Isa. xxx. 18; he spies him afar off, he stands ready to welcome a sinner, so soon as his heart looks but towards him: he that will draw nigh to them that are afar off, will certainly draw nigh to them that draw near to him, Jer. xxxi. 18. Nay, the father had compassion on him, his bowels yearn towards him, whilst he is afar off; nay, he runs to meet him, he prevents a sinner with speed; mercy comes not on foot-pace, but runs; it comes upon wings, as David speaks, "He rides on the cherubs, he did fly; yea, he did fly on the wings of the wind," Ps. xviii. 9, 10, as Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to bring an answer to Daniel's prayer, Dan. ix. The son's pace is slow, he arose and came; the father's is swift, he ran: the son had most need to run; bowels moving with mercy, out-pace bowels pinched with want. God makes more haste to shew mercy, than we to receive; whilst misery walks, mercy flies; nay, he falls on his son's neck, hugging and embracing him. Oh! the depth of grace! who would not have loathed such a person to touch or come near him, whilst he smells of the swine he kept? Could a man come near him without stopping his nose? Would it not make a man almost rid his stomach to go near him? yet, behold, the Father of sinners falls upon the neck of such filthy wretches; mercy and grace is not squeamish; the prodigal comes like a rogue, yet the father embraces him like a bride: he falls a kissing him, even those lips that had lately been lapping in the

hog-trough, and kissed baggage harlots. A man would have thought he should have rather kicked him than kissed him; yet this token of reconciliation and grace he gives him, with this seal he confirms his compassion; nay, he calls for the best robe, and kills the fatted calf for him. The son's ambition was to be but as a hired servant, and lo, he is feasted in the best robes. God will do far better for a sinner than he can imagine himself, *above all he is able either to ask or think*. How then do poverty, nakedness, emptiness pinch thee, because of thy riot? Canst thou see enough in thy father's house, and therefore begin to pant in heart after him? wouldst thou fain have admittance? the Father of Mercy is ready to deal thus with thee, therefore object not unworthiness: for who more unworthy than such a son?

And so we come to the second branch of the text, to wit, the end of that free love of God, in giving salvation, or the inseparable fruit, which follows this grace; it teacheth to deny ungodliness. And, before I fall upon the particular fruits here mentioned, it will not be amiss to observe something in general from the connection of God's free grace, and the fruit that follows. Let us therefore take this general point into our consideration, that wheresoever the grace of God brings salvation, it is not bestowed in vain; but inclines the heart to new obedience, and makes him fruitful in his life, in all well-pleasingness, who partakes of this grace. By the particulars mentioned in the text, you may plainly see how natural this general doctrine ariseth from it; which I have rather pitched upon, that I might prevent that licentious soul-destroying misconceit, which even in the apostle's time, men were apt to infer from the free grace of God bringing salvation, which he observing, strikes at it with a holy vehemency and indignation: their inference was this; "If we be saved by grace, then we may continue in sin, that grace may abound," Rom. vi. 1, 2, 3, which conclusion carnal reason is very apt to raise from the premises; but the apostle answers it first with an *absit*, *God forbid*; and then with strong arguments, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" and so goes on. The truth is, the doctrine of free grace, by the devilish cunning of that old serpent, who knows his own bane and ruin is contained in this sovereign antidote, hath been marvellously abused divers

ways, in all ages; some, as namely, such before mentioned, overthrowing it with licentious inferences; against which presumption, as the apostle in many other passages, so in the text especially, opposeth himself: others again abuse it, by establishing a righteousness of their own in the room of it; against which he contends vehemently, especially in the whole epistle to the Galatians.

It will not be amiss, therefore, before we make good the point in hand, to evacuate these abuses, by vindicating and setting the doctrine of free grace at liberty: to this end you must understand in what sense good works, or inherent righteousness, are necessary attendants on free grace; necessary indeed they are, not casually, but consequently; not to be substituted in the room of free grace for attaining salvation, as if that was a licentious doctrine, not to be allowed; as disagreeing with the mind of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should rely only on them. For if God be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who can stand, "seeing no man liveth and sinneth not?" nay, seeing all our righteousness is as a menstruous cloth, and when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants;" and therefore cannot claim salvation as a debt due for them: neither are our works of righteousness necessary attendants on grace as co-assistants, as if they concurred with free grace to produce salvation; and that salvation is not attainable by the favour of God alone, but by works of ours, to make up what is wanting in that to effect it: against both these conceits of the necessity of our righteousness, the apostle bends all his strength, Eph. ii. 8; "By grace are you saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Rom. xi. 5: "If of works, then grace is no more grace. Christ is become of none effect unto you." Gal. v. 4: "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace." The whole 4th chapter to the Romans is nothing but a clearing of this, as all the epistle to the Galatians; so that it is manifest, that our righteousness, or obedience, hath not the least stroke in justification, or salvation, efficiently. You will say, that salvation is promised unto good works. I answer, That even from the promises of salvation it is manifest, that obedience has no causing stroke, for then it were due to it of debt, not of promise, or grace; the promise of it is a sufficient argument that it proceeds from bounty, otherwise we need not expect it by

promise, but claim it as due. You will say, To what purpose serves our inherent righteousness then? doth grace make works void? Some, indeed, as I said before, err on this hand, as others do on the other; but know, that we, with the apostle, do not by grace make void obedience, but establish it rather; for the grace that brings salvation teacheth obedience also; only we endeavour to abolish that sinister, dangerous end, which some propound to themselves in obeying; whereby both Christ is robbed of the glory of his all-sufficient merits either wholly, or in part, by annexing our obedience thereto, as not sufficient without it; as also our obedience becomes vain, and of none effect at all; for, in justification, works serve for no use, nay, they damnify, being brought in for that purpose, as they evacuate that grace, which only can serve it. You will say then, Wherein consists the necessity of obedience? I answer, works are necessary.

1. *Ex parte Dei.* They necessarily follow the free grace of Christ, in that God in Christ hath engaged himself to establish and set up obedience in the heart and life of such on whom he entails salvation by grace, as appears in Isaiah, ch. xxxv. chap. xl. ch. xli. and Jeremiah, ch. xxxi. Ezekiel, ch. xx. Now where God himself hath inseparably joined salvation, and a holy life, and hath promised the one as well as the other, they must of necessity go together; for what God hath joined together, who can separate? No man can disjoin what he hath united.

2. Obedience is necessarily annexed to free grace, *ex parte rei*; that is, there is a proportion and con-naturalness between free grace and holiness, that they mutually embrace each other, as the Psalmist speaks; "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" that is, God's mercy and truth in our inward parts; his peace with us, and our righteousness towards him, agree in one: it is a sure rule, that *simile gaudet simili*. God's love to his selected ones hath an assimilating virtue to win love to him again, as the heat of one coal kindles another: the loadstones do not more naturally draw iron after them, than the divine loadstone of God's free love draws our love; "We love him, because he first loved us," saith St. John; kindness begets kindness.

3. Finally, obedience is necessary, *ex parte nostri*, in regard of ourselves. (1.) In respect of employment, our condition

being a state of subjection to the will of God, therefore we obey him, because then we are warrantably employed, as a servant follows his master's business, because he is a servant; we must be in action, and obedience is the proper action that best suits our condition; therefore, we must needs obey: if we were our own, and not under authority, we might chuse our own business: but, being under command, we must do the will of him that is over us. (2.) In respect of thankfulness for what we have already received; so far our obedience is necessary; God hath set us free, giving us his Son, made us heirs, settled heaven on us, made both our present and future happiness, having undertaken to furnish us with all things useful; so that our improvement thereof in holiness, is not our business for the furthering any good to ourselves, God having reserved the whole provision of grace to his own care; therefore, all we can do, must serve to express our thankfulness unto him, who hath so loved us: this St. Paul intimates, saying, "Ye are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits;" also, 1 Cor. x. 31; "Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God:" the end of obedience must be the setting forth of his praise, or the magnifying of him, shewing forth the glory of his grace, which is the end why God redeemed us. "All the promises are yea and amen, to the glory of God by us;" 2 Cor. i. 20. But most excellent to the purpose is that of the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 14: "He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God; for which cause we faint not." What higher or better end can a man aim at, seeing his own turn is already served by Christ? therefore all our obedience ought ultimately to level at the exalting of God, who hath exalted us. This increase he expects of the talents he commits to us; so that our care must not be so much what becomes of ourselves, but that God be honoured: yea, though it occasion tribulation, yet therein rejoice, for that he will care well enough for us. (3.) In respect of our own present comfort; we rejoice in the way of obedience. Doth Paul rejoice when the church doth well and stand fast? Much more then may they themselves rejoice; "I will rejoice, (saith David), to run the way of God's commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart;"

for as nothing cuts the heart more than a benumbed straitness, and dulness, and uncouthness in duty; so nothing cheers the hearts of God's children more, than a free readiness of spirit to do the will of God; because their delight is in the law of the Lord; it is sweeter than the honey comb; it is meat and drink to them that do his will; so that meat cannot glad the hungry more, than enlargement in obedience glads the panting soul. Again, in obedience, God speaks comfortably, he speaks peace, and commends with a *well done, good and faithful servant*; so he commended Abraham, Moses, David, and others: now God's good word and countenance brings much more joy with it, than the best commendation a prince can give his subject. Moreover it is a comfortable evidence that we are in Christ; for our fruit will shew upon what root we grow; the Spirit then bears loud witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, if the fruit be right; now, I need not tell you, what joy there is in such sweet testimonies, which silence all heart-cutting fears. Observe that admirable passage of Isaiah, who having published the promised help of God to cure lameness, dumbness, and faintness in God's service, concludes thus, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away," chap. xxxv. 10. And chap. xli. 10, saith he, "Fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness." I might add, that holiness must necessarily attend grace in respect of others; "Our light must so shine, that they must see our good works, and glorify our Father;" that we may be examples to win them, or convince them of their evil, by our conversation; that the weak may not only be offended, but also built up, of which the apostle Paul is very cautelous; and that the enemy may not blaspheme, and be encouraged, or hardened in an evil way. And thus you see what ends obedience serves for, and what not; and how the doctrine of free grace and obedience must go hand-in-hand together, and kiss each other.

The uses of this general doctrine, we shall have fitter occasion to apply in handling the particulars; we begin with the first, and from thence let us observe this position of the apostle; The grace of God teacheth, such as are saved by it, to deny ungodli-

ness. For the better apprehending whereof, let us take into consideration, 1. What ungodliness is. 2. What it is to deny it. 3. What the grace of God, teaching this, is. 4. Why this must be denied. Why the grace of God must teach a denial of it.

1. This vice of ungodliness is well ranked in the first place by the apostle, being the capital ring-leading mother vice, that begets and brings forth all other; let God for dependence on his will be once cast off, and it is the opening of the sluices for all manner of evil to overflow; as you may see it notably verified in the Jews in Jeremy's time, who shews what an inundation overflows from the leaving of God; but thou saidst, *There is no hope*, there is the casting of God off; then follows, "No, but I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." He harps on the same strings in chap. 15, and they said, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices." But that you may the better perceive what this ungodliness is, note, that it consists of two branches: 1. Privative. 2. Positive. The privative ungodliness in the apostle's phrase, is a *living as without God in the world*, and this is twofold also, 1. In judgment. 2. In practice. 1. A privative ungodliness in judgment, is plain and proper atheism; of which kind the Psalmist speaks, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God: they are corrupt, they have done abominable works," Psal. xiv. 1; such are the grossest sort of ungodly, who have put out the common light of nature; "Ye worship, ye know not what," John iv. 22; Acts xviii. 23. 2. The privative ungodliness in practice, is such a life as hath no regard unto God, either to fetch any thing from him, or to return any thing to him; when men live solely upon, and unto, the creatures, as if there were no God at all, being put quite out of the thoughts of men; of which the Psalmist speaks also, "The wicked will not seek after God," Psal. x. 4, 5; 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; "God is not in all his thoughts; thy judgments are far above out of his sight." There you may see the fearful fruit of it also; of this sort it is that the apostle means in the passage abovementioned, "Being without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. These two branches made up a privative ungodliness completely; the one hath always the other attending it, but not so *è converso*; many will not deny a God, but yet will live as without God. In this latter branch is included all omission of worship, reverence, fear, and confidence, and love of him,

whether for matter, manner, or other requisite circumstances ; and such omission in privative ungodliness, which is not confined unto his person, but extends also unto his divine will ; in brief, this privative ungodliness is, *carentia rectitudinis debita inesse* ; as it hath respect unto God himself. 2. Positive ungodliness is more than a bare being without God, or want of that original rectitude required ; there is *aliquid positivum* in it, and it is a contrariety, whether in judgment or practice, unto God, and his will revealed, of our demeanour towards him. I will briefly touch the nature of this kind of ungodliness, with its difference from the former ; and first in the judgment ; it is one thing not to know or understand that there is a God, and who he is ; another thing positively to determine in judgment that there is no God, or that he is not the true God, who is revealed to be in the world ; this latter is positive ungodliness in the highest degree, wherein there is an intellectual act of contradiction ; so likewise for the judgment to affirm, that any thing else is God save the Lord ; for a positive ungodliness may be either negative or affirmative ; in a word, all reasonings and disputes, which either resolve the mind, or raise doubts in it against the nature, persons, attributes, or will of God, are ungodliness in judgment ; positive practical ungodliness is, when in our wills and lives we do not only not embrace him, nor follow his revealed will, but also actually reject him and his will, and embrace something else in his room, and walk contrarily to him ; as namely, if we set up another God instead of him admiring it more than him, ascribing more to it than him, esteeming it above him, being over-ruled by it rather than him, standing in more awe of it than him. So likewise when he commands worship and reverence, we refuse to give it to him, or such as he requires, behaving ourselves saucily, or unmannerly towards him ; when he bids us hearken or obey, we stop or deafen our ears against him, and pull in the shoulder ; are stiff-necked with iron sinews, and walk contrary unto him, profaning and polluting his worship, name, and sabbaths, finding our own pleasures, and doing our own works on his holy day ; and instead of offering pure sacrifices, we offer the sacrifices of fools, even halting, blind, proud, and menstruous services. Thus you see a summary of the ungodliness that must be denied as it hath reference to the first table, for hereunto I conceive it is limited

by the apostle in this text; for that the breaches of the second table are contained in the other branch of *worldly lusts*; although I deny not but that ungodliness hath a longer extent in many other places of scripture. But I come to shew,

2. What it is to deny this ungodliness: here note by the way, that the apostle saith not, that the grace of God, for the present instant, utterly abolishes and destroys all ungodliness, that it be no more, but teacheth us to deny it; intimating, that a remainder of some ungodliness may consist with the grace of God, in respect of its being, so it do not reign, but be denied; a comfortable note to such as are exercised with buffetings of temptation, whereby they may find matter of greatest comfort in that, in which they usually feel most anxiety; because of buffetings, commonly troubles of soul arise, like beating waves, whereas the opposition is the work of the grace of God in them; for denial, (which the grace of God teacheth,) in general, is not only a not consenting, or agreeing to ungodly motions, but also a bending of all a man's force and might against such insurrections; of these two things doth a divine denial of ungodliness consist.

(1.) I say there is not a yielding or consenting to the motion; that is, although the beloved of the Lord, with Paul, are violently carried captive sometimes into some ungodliness; yet all the rhetoric or threats of the devil, or the world, shall not overcome them, so far as to like and take pleasure in ungodliness: well may they hold them a while by force under ungodliness, but to affect it, embrace it, of choice to prefer it before godliness, they can no sooner be won to this, than a bird pent up in a cage can be won to affect the cage more than the open air, or a fish to affect dry land rather than the water, which yet by force they may be held unto: Paul was never brought so far as to say, *The evil I would do, that do I*; but holds here, even in that captivity of his, *The evil I would not do, that do I*. It is true, there is something of the will in every act of ungodliness whatsoever; namely, a not sufficient willing of that act, which is a defect in the will, for that it should imperiously over-rule all sinful motions, and have them under command: there are also sometimes some broken velleities in the will of God's beloved ones to some ungodly motions; but then the judgment is mistaken, and so the affections are misplaced for a time; but

these are distempered fits, or disturbed notions out of their place ; in a word, if the will at any time incline to ungodly motions, there is a more predominant act of it to the contrary side ; for although there be some remainder of a corrupt will, yet is it in a great measure captivated to the power of the renewed will ; whilst that is mutinous, this sways the sceptre, and suppresses the mutinies ; some renitencies in the corrupt will against the renewed, do not infer an agreement unto ungodly motions with consent and choice. And this is the first branch of denying ungodliness, a not yielding or liking.

(2.) In denying ungodliness, there is more than a bare refusal ; there is also a repulse given to some ungodly motions upon the soul ; which assault is the enforcement of some ungodliness, either by bewitching baits, or alluring incitements, or terrifying threats, apt to awe the soul, that it dare not say nay. When the soul is thus hard pressed, a repulse given hereto is properly a denial ; which imparts such a distaste of the ungodliness pressed to be embraced, as that all persuasions find but a deaf ear thereto, and evaporate ; fair promises made to the embraces of ungodliness, cannot equipoise those made to godliness, which are true and certain ; therefore in a godly denial the believer takes notice, that ungodliness offers too little to win him to that side ; therefore he bids it avaunt, and sends it packing : on the other side, in a holy denial of ungodliness, the believer sees, that whatever ungodliness threatens, if it be not admitted, though it could presently execute so much fury as it pretends ; yet being weighed in the balance with the fruit of departing from godliness, its threatenings are found but flea-bites, in comparison of the weight of wrath ready to fall on such as depart from the living God. Suppose the denial of ungodliness cause the destruction of the body, which is the most and worst it can do ; what is that to the casting of soul and body into hell-fire for ever ? If a man must suffer, what side soever he takes, it is no more than even natural instinct will teach him to choose, *et malis minimum*. These and such like considerations in denial of ungodliness, cause a repulse with distaste and offence. Many wicked men depart from ungodliness sometimes, but it is like the parting with intimate friends, with yearning or heart after it, sore against their minds, it is a great trouble and grief to them ; but the godly man's heart leaps within him for so

good a riddance of so troublesome a guest, like the plucking a thorn out of a man's foot, or the voiding a stone out of the bladder, which caused pain and anguish; for the troublesome assaults and restless solicitations of ungodliness, are as pricks in his sides, and thorns in his eyes.

(3.) Besides this distaste for denial, there is a perpetual struggling, and heaving, with all a man's might, to get rid of ungodliness. There are strong cries, and many times tears of moan and anger against it, joined with inward wrestlings for mastery, and fightings within, as the apostle speaks of himself; one while by prayer, imploring heaven against ungodly motions, that they may not prevail; another while laying at them by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, after Christ's example, Mat. iv.; another while cutting off all provision to weaken or starve them, that their strength may abate and decay; yea, if need be, there is, in this denial, fasting and beating down a man's own body, when treacherously it begins to take part with ungodliness, to further the cause of it. In a word, every stone is turned, every ordinance is tried, every opportunity is laid hold on for advantage in denying ungodliness, to discomfit and give it the overthrow; and so you see what the denying of ungodliness is. But these are harsh terms, you will say; you told us before of salvation by free grace, and now it seems there must be old tugging and fighting for it. I answer, all this hinders not but that salvation is of free grace; "for all the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed." This is first made sure by grace, and this denial of ungodliness follows, as the matter of our employment in this life. Some will say, If salvation be made sure first, then this toil and labour may be spared. But let such know, that he who settles salvation upon men, also teaches them this lesson of denying ungodliness. Seeing, therefore, God will not have this labour spared, it must not be spared. But, it may be said, I cannot, for my heart, deny ungodliness; it is so bewitching, I cannot say nay. Indeed this denial of ungodliness is an impossible thing to man; strength of nature cannot reach it; flesh and blood neither reveals it, nor works it; nay, the law of works, though it reveal this denial, yet works it not; it is attainable only by that grace of God which bringeth salvation; so much is intimated by that expression, *It teacheth*.

3. Now what this teaching is, we will briefly open unto you: for the clearing whereof consider, that two things are required to teaching, properly understood; 1. A diffusion of sufficient light from the teacher to enlighten the ignorant taught. 2. Such a manner of revealing it as suits with the capacity of him that is instructed; both which imply, 1. A sufficient ability in the teacher to teach. 2. A dexterity, or faculty to wind himself and his notions into the apprehension of him that is taught; so as that he communicates his own skill unto the other: improperly a man may be said to teach, when he explains and opens hidden notions, though hearers learn not; but teaching being a relative term, a man cannot properly be said to teach, except some be taught.

To come to our purpose, the free grace of God in Christ, that is, Christ through God's free grace teacheth, when having sufficient light in himself to know how to dissipate ungodly motions and withal a notable dexterity, or faculty, to know how to reveal this his skill to men; that although they are dull of capacity, yet he can so make them understand him as to participate in the self-same skill, in kind, though not in perfection: simply to have the theory of the same skill to deny ungodliness, is not to be properly, or fully taught, of Christ; for it is with divine teaching as it is with human, the teaching is divers as the matter taught: in human teaching, the teacher instructs either in scientific, or mechanical arts; either such as concern the theory, or the practice. Now in teaching the liberal sciences, as logic, &c., it requires no more but instilling the same notions he hath, into the understanding of him that learns, who is then taught when he truly understands these sciences; but it is otherwise in teaching mechanical arts, to wit, handy-crafts; for the teacher in imparting his skill, must bring the learner to be able to do as himself can, else he hath not taught him: thus it is with divine teaching; Christ hath his doctrinal truths, which properly concern the understanding; as, that there is a God, who he is, and what the mystery of the Trinity is, and what the incarnation of Christ, with the like; so far as the knowledge of these is required, Christ's teaching is no more but a distilling of a clear and right apprehension of them; but then there are some practical truths of his, wherein to be skilful requires his teaching also; about these Christ not only reads his lectures of

them, but infuseth a sagacity to act, or his skill to work ; as the scribe doth not only open the mysteries of orthography, but guides the scholar's hand also in writing, till he can guide it well himself ; so Christ teacheth practical divine arts ; he leaves not his scholars till they can do themselves (though not of themselves) as he instructs and teacheth them.

For the further clearing of this truth, note, that this teaching is instrumental or original ; the former kind of teaching is imperfect, the latter complete and effectual : the instrumental is by outward means ; the original and effectual teaching, which proceeds from God's favour in Christ, is the immediate act of God's spirit ; many attain the former, who yet come short of the latter : the external teaching is either by the word itself, or by the ministers of it. The teaching of the word itself is by its own arguments, or by the ministers, by explanation and application of the word, and the arguments thereof ; which, by a common light, may teach unto conviction to rational regarders ; but, of themselves, they cannot effectually infuse the Christian skill of denying ungodliness : for as neither Paul's planting, nor Apollo's watering, give increase ; so neither can the letter of the word, without the spirit of it, which is the animating or quickening soul of the word. It is the internal teaching of the Spirit which alone gives efficacy to the denial of ungodliness ; neither word nor minister avail any thing, but this Spirit. If you ask, How this is wrought by the Spirit of Christ ? I answer, That Christ, having merited salvation and sanctification for the elect, takes order, and provides such a guide, as is every way complete for the perfecting of the saints, that is, his Spirit ; and because they are rational creatures he is to deal withal, he deals with them, not by compulsive violence to forsake ungodliness, but persuasively to win them ; God shall persuade Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; so that the work of the Spirit must be teaching, not forcing, as irrational creatures are forced and necessitated. Now, because there is such a stubborn refractoriness in the hearts of all men naturally, to be ruled and persuaded, and such natural crossness ; all the difficulty lies in winning men to be willing, or to be persuaded, which no created power can reach unto : the main teaching therefore of the Spirit, is to instil so much into a vessel of mercy, as shall win him to a willingness to deny ungodliness ; so as not to

be able to say nay, through the resolute bent of the will thereto.

Now, how the Spirit doth this, we will consider a little : the Spirit makes manifest to the soul, partly by restoring sight, partly with the clearness of light, what horrid loathsomeness there is in ungodliness ; and that not with some obscure glimmerings, but with a full delineation and anatomizing of its hidden ugliness ; not with an itching, rhetorical strain to captivate the fancy, as man's wisdom sometimes may do, which the apostle calls enticing words, but with such an evidence as is attended with demonstration and power : so that though he leave the heart without an absolute necessary compulsion (for so a man cannot deny ungodliness), yet he so convinceth, as that all whatsoever pleads for ungodliness is silenced, and the pleadings of the Spirit against ungodliness, with the decipherings of it, are so prevalent, and carry such a weight along with them, that the soul, thus taught by the Spirit, cannot choose but be overruled freely to agree with it ; which is such a drawing of the Spirit, as sets the soul a running upon godliness with a holy violence. Such a necessary, yet voluntary tractableness, by the prevalency of the Spirit, was fore-propheesied and promised by Christ : "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ; they shall be all taught of God." This latter passage our Saviour establisheth by his own mouth. In brief, the Spirit of Christ hath such a prevailing power on such as it teacheth, with the clear light and conviction it brings to the heart, as that it stirs up such a necessary, yet voluntary antipathy and indignation against ungodliness, as there is in men naturally against poison, or desperate mischief approaching ; who are not by any compulsion forced to shun them, and yet of necessity they cannot choose but shun and fly from them ; and yet it is as voluntary and free an eschewing thereof, as any free choice a man can make.

4. There must of necessity be such a denial of ungodliness in all that shall be saved by grace, because, (1.) The Lord hath coupled them together : so that for the same reason that we expect salvation freely from him, we must conclude, that this denial of ungodliness must be practised ; for the ground of both is one, even the same good pleasure of God's will. If any conclude a certainty of salvation, because God hath revealed his good will therein (which is the only ground of expecting the same), where

upon a believer may safely build; this will of his being a firm rock that cannot fail, he must, by the same reason, conclude an equal certainty and necessity, that ungodliness must also be denied, there being the same will of God revealed concerning it. If his revealed will be of force to conclude one thing, it is of like force to conclude another, that is equally founded on it. If a man imagine that God may, and will dispense with, denying ungodliness, after he hath declared his mind, that ungodliness must be denied; he hath no ground to think but he also may, and will dispense with his own promise, of saving by grace, though he hath peremptorily declared himself herein; and so he must become changeable, and so there can be no footing to depend on the dispensing with his word; for he that will be false in one thing, may also be so in another, and what trust can there be reposed in such an one? But God is far from such changeableness; his revealed will hath an universal stability, and cannot totter. To whom the promise of salvation is made, it is impossible but it shall be performed, and they shall be saved, because he hath said it; and so who are thus saved, it is impossible but they must deny ungodliness, because he hath said that also.

(2.) Ungodliness must be denied, because it is a manifest fighting against God, which procures not only his displeasure, but also incenseth him as an enemy. A consent unto, and practice of, ungodliness, is more than a breaking of his bonds in sunder, and casting off his cords from us; it is a kind of lifting up the heel against him, and of persecuting him, as Christ proclaimed from heaven to Paul, when he practised that ungodliness of his enraging against the truth: now Gamaliel, Paul's master, though he was of the wicked counsel of the ungodly persecutors, yet this inconveniency he saw, in opposing the godliness of the disciples, they would be found to fight against God; and therefore very powerfully persuades them to desist this course, and to take heed to themselves in this matter, Acts v. 34, 39. Now, what the issue of this lifting up the heel against God will prove, hear the Lord himself speaking by the Psalmist; "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision; he shall speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure;" our Saviour tells us that such enemies as shake off his yoke, and will not have him reign over

them, must *be brought and slain before him* ; so that they do but *kick against the pricks*, and therefore, in this regard, there is abundance of reason to deny ungodliness : and if this were not the bitter fruit of the enmity of ungodliness, yet it is but reasonable to deny it, for its enmity against God ; seeing all his kindness, especially this of saving by grace, deserves better than such an unkind requiting of such evil for his good with an ingenuous spirit. This is a most piercing argument to deny ungodliness, “ I beseech you, by the mercy of God ;” and “ Seeing we have such promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves.” Who spits not at the villainy of Judas in betraying so good a master ? and who abhors not the conspiracy of such a subject, whose life his prince hath spared of mere grace ? If Ezra’s argument be of such force to restrain ungodliness, namely, “ Seeing then our God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, should we again break thy commandments ? How much more should this argument work, seeing thou, our God, hast crowned us with glory and dignity, and hast done marvellous things for us, should we practise ungodliness against thee, and not deny the same ?

(3.) The denying of ungodliness is necessary, because not denying it brings many a woe, and breeds much trouble in this life, as may be seen in David’s case, who caused the enemy to blaspheme ; you know that it is ungodliness that separates God and man, and causeth God to hide his face. Observe the truth hereof in other examples, as the church in the Canticles, chap. v. and Manasses, and Hezekiah, and old Eli, yea, all the whole nation of the Jews, from their infancy to their expiration. It is the practice, and not denying of ungodliness, that ushers in the messengers of wrath, and puts dismal denunciations into their mouths, as you may see in Moses, Nathan, and all the prophets ; now if it were certain there were no miscarriage in the world to come for ungodliness ; yet the dear rate to be paid, even in this life, for it, hath argument enough to a judgment, not wholly blinded, to convince of the necessity of denying ungodliness : who would buy David’s sin at his rate, or Spira’s denying of Christ, when he verily thought there could not be worse torments in hell than what he felt in this life, which soon scorched up his flesh, and consumed his vitals ?

Now, finally, this denial of ungodliness must be taught by

divine grace, because it is impossible for flesh and blood to attain the skill and dexterity of this mystery; "The carnal mind is not subject to this law of God; nor discerneth (nor pryeth) into the things of God; neither indeed can be, (saith the apostle) because they are spiritually discerned." It is a military discipline, neither naturally infused, neither learned of the principles of reason: the doctrine of this mystery, and the sagacity to learn it, are of God alone; and it is so hidden a thing, that the world derides it as vanity and folly, yea, amongst such as go for wise men in the world. So our Saviour affirms in his prayer to his father; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." This being so, how is it possible to attain to denial of ungodliness, but from a teaching that is divine? especially considering, that besides the imparting notions of the mysteries of this art, there is also required an overruling power to draw us to the things revealed, which are so harsh and contrary to our inclinations, which are so corrupt, and that not by compulsion, as I said, but persuasively; for when the heart is known, it makes so much against the natural humour of a man, that he rather distastes the practice of this mystery of denying ungodliness than affects it. It is so against the hair, that the trade will seem an Egyptian bondage; let men but observe their own humours, and this will be too manifest: for example, consider when you are in necessity, what dependence is there upon the creature, and what diffidence in the Creator! What fear is there of men, and what presumption upon God! What fondness of the world, and contempt of God, and his ordinances! What irreverence, wearisomeness, and dislike of God's worship! which are all ungodly things. Who is able to deny and put off these things from himself? Nay, who naturally can find in his heart to disclaim and renounce them, and make it his daily trade to pluck down ungodliness? Alas! they are strong holds which the heart of man builds and fortifies, out of his natural enmity against God; it must, therefore, be God alone who is mighty, who must pull down and demolish these strong holds; will, skill, and power, must come from him, or it will never be done.

Use 1. Doth divine grace teach all, to deny ungodliness, that shall be saved? then must I read the fearful doom of all who

have not learned this lesson, and are not yet taught it of God, even that harsh censure passed on Simon Magus, "They are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, and have not their part in this matter." I say, As yet this is their fearful condition, and if they continue thus untaught this lesson, there can be no salvation by grace for them. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven;" when to such as the Lord opens not to, he will say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." Men commonly dream of a strange kind of gospel, that never came into God's mind; that, seeing Christ hath died, they may live as they list, fighting against God and godliness, letting themselves loose to all impiety, and yet go to heaven. Certainly, had God opened such a gap to let in such an inundation of impiety, he could never have justly complained of the deluge of it, that overflows the world; far be it from the holy God, whose purity abhors it, to allow such licentiousness to men; no, no, God's aim was at the damming up the fountain of sin; Jesus Christ *redeemed us to be a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works*; not because we are holy, but that we might be holy. Some licentious ungodly wretches, I know, reply, though to their own ruin, (for to such the gospel proves a stone of offence) that Christ justifies the ungodly, and we are saved by faith without works; but, alas! they observe not how cunningly the devil equivocates to lull them asleep in their ungodly practices. It is true, indeed, that Christ justifies the ungodly, that is, he finds them ungodly when he imputes his righteousness unto them; but he doth not leave them ungodly after he hath justified them, *but teacheth them to deny ungodliness*: he affords no cloak to persistence and perseverance in ungodliness, but will *come in flaming fire, with his mighty angels, to render vengeance unto such*: he that denies not ungodliness, him will Christ deny before his Father which is in heaven. Why then wilt thou be deluded with such gross sophistry, in so clear a sunshine of the gospel? Is not the light so bright that thine own heart checks thee? "And if thine heart condemn thee, God is greater, and searcheth all things." It is true also, we are saved by faith without works, but here also Satan equivocates as grossly as in the other case; for, although faith only saves without works efficiently, yet no-

consequently, as I said before ; that is, though faith only saves, yet that faith must not be alone that saves, but must be attended with its fruits, to wit, denying ungodliness ; else it is so far from saving, that it is but a dead faith, and he is but a vain man that hath no better, as St. James well affirms ; the person believing must deny ungodliness, though this denial works not his salvation ; as the apple makes not the apple-tree, but the apple-tree brings forth the apple, and not the apple the tree, yet the apple-tree must bear apples, or else it is no true apple-tree. Our Saviour speaks to the same purpose, “ A good tree bringeth forth good fruit ;” he doth not say, the fruit makes it a good tree, yet the good fruit is inseparable. I speak not of quantities, or degrees, as neither doth our Saviour, but of the truth, to wit, a real and sincere denial of ungodliness. It is very certain, as thorns and thistles bear no grapes, or figs, so neither do true vines, or fig-trees, bear haws or thistles, as the thorn and thistle do. Some accident, either inward distemper, or outward temptation, may indeed putrify, or wither their fruit. Some again, sufficiently convinced of this truth, are apt to think there is time enough yet to deny ungodliness : one of the enough there is indeed, time little enough. It may be thou art dropping into the grave with age, and thy sun is setting, and all thy time past thou hast walked in ungodliness ; God hath not been in all thy thoughts ; insomuch that thou art even tanned with ungodliness now, and accustomed to do evil ; it is become a second nature to thee ; and is it time enough to deny ungodliness ? Is not the mastery of it exceeding difficult ? Is it not deeply rooted ? And canst thou cast it out at pleasure ? Can such an old familiar, with which thou hast had so long acquaintance, and taken so sweet content, be so easily shaken off ? Though delays of this nature are to all men dangerous, yet to none so dangerous as those who being old in age, are old in ugliness too : they are apt to think themselves too wise to be taught, and count it a shame to turn over a new leaf then, which will proclaim all their former wisdom to be but folly ; but whilst they think themselves so wise in this, I am sure they are become fools, in thinking there will be time enough yet to cast off the viper of ungodliness, which may destroy them, God knows how soon ; but, unto all procrastinators of ungodliness, let them know, they are warned in time, God yet knocks and calls ; how soon he may

withdraw himself, and cease to solicit any more, either outwardly or inwardly, who knows? Remember what he said to Ephraim, "He is joined to idols, let him alone;" and what he saith to the same people of the Jews, by the prophet Isaiah, "Why should you be smitten any more, you will revolt more and more." Again, "Make the hearts of this people fat, and their ears dull, that hearing they may hear, and not understand, (&c.) lest they should be converted, and I should heal them." It grieves me to read so sad a lecture, but the security of many constrains me, lest they should perish in their ungodliness.

Use 2. Hence gather also, that if any man would deny ungodliness, he must go to the school of grace to learn it, whereby he may discern one notable and comfortable difference between legal and evangelical righteousness: in matter they agree; for as the law, so the gospel, expects a denial of ungodliness: but the law leaves a man herein to shift as well as he can for himself; as for help, besides his own wit and strength, he must look for none: the law exhibits none; the tale of bricks must be delivered in, or they must bow down their backs to the smiter; as for straw, and other accommodations, they must seek it where they may, none shall be given; and therefore well may the rigour thereof be accounted a burthen, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; from which insupportable burthen, our dear Lord and Saviour hath purchased our glorious liberty at no mean price: even this liberty, that by grace we shall be taught and enabled to the denial of ungodliness, under the gospel: God is not so hard a master as to expect a crop where he sows not, nor increase where he doth not give a stock of talents to trade; nor sends us on a warfare at our own provision; but first he steels us against the adversary with skill, courage, and fortitude. St. Augustin had sufficient ground to pray as he did, *Domine, da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*; which yet is no new gospel, but as ancient as a visible church, typified in God's fore-furnishing Noah with an ark, that he might be saved when the world of the ungodly perished, and left him not to his own wit to shift for himself; so also requiring a sacrifice of Abraham, he provides him a burnt-offering; in his sending his people Israel on that tedious journey from Egypt to Canaan, he divides the sea and Jordan, for them to make them a way; and to supply them, he sends manna from heaven, and water out of the rock; and when

Joshua is to enter upon the conquest of that land, he appears in a vision to him, and bids him not fear nor be discouraged; ‘For, (saith he), I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ Whenever he requires any thing of such as are in covenant with him in Christ, he will take order there shall be no lack of any thing that may accommodate them to the easy performance of it; “It is God that strengtheneth me, (saith David); My heart and my strength faileth, (saith he), but God is the strength of my heart.” Christ tells Peter, “That Satan hath desired to winnow him as wheat, but I prayed for thee, (saith he), that thy faith fail not.” “I have laboured more abundantly than they all, (saith the apostle Paul); yet not I, but the grace of God.” “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me,” saith he. It is observable, that whereas according to the nature of covenants, each party covenanting mutually bind themselves by the covenant of their several parts; but, in the new covenant of the gospel betwixt God, and those that are justified by grace, it is otherwise; God indeed binds himself *to blot out their transgressions, and to remember their sins no more*; but whereas we should bind ourselves to remove away our stony hearts, and to walk with soft hearts before him, to get his law into us, *and never to depart from him*, which is our part of the covenant; it being our duty to God; yet he undertakes by promise to furnish us out of his store with all this, “I will take your stony heart out of your flesh—I will write my law in your inward parts, that you shall never depart from me.” Which answers this clause in the text, *The grace of God shall teach us* to deny that ungodliness which he expects to be denied; and therefore unto this grace must we fly for sufficiency to denial, if ever we mean to attain it; the power is not in our own hands, nor the skill; ungodliness is a devil which will not be cast out, but by seeking aid from above, from whence comes every good, and every perfect gift, even from the Father of lights. “Be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the power of his might, seeing in denial of ungodliness you wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness,” Eph. vi. You shall faint if you draw not *aqua vitæ* from this well-spring of life; but this shall renew your strength as is typified in Samson, fighting against the Philistines, who after he had, with the jaw-bone, slain a thousand of them, he fainted, until God opened, or clave, a

hollow place in Lehi; which I take to be a place so called, though our translation reads it, the jaw; Judges xv. 19. Let me therefore urge you, as once Jacob did his sons, when the famine was in Canaan, and no food to be found at home, "Why do you look one on another, (saith he), I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; go down and buy, that we may live, and not die." Or, as the famished lepers, that went to the camp of the Syrians. In like manner, I say, why stand you still, looking either carelessly or ruefully on yourselves, or on one another, when all strength in the world fails to vanquish ungodliness, which devours worse than a famine: you have heard, as well as I, that there is spiritual food for strength in the gospel; go to it then, and fetch from thence, that you may live and not perish; this bread enough in the Father's house sends the enfeebled, half-starved prodigal thither, seeing he could subsist no longer of himself. You may say, how shall I partake of this skill and help of God to deny ungodliness? I answer, 1. Be in God's way, and come to his school, (as I said) where he teacheth to deny ungodliness. They that never go to his school, or put themselves under a master that cannot teach, shall never know letters, or be skilful in any art, but will ever be to seek: and it is not every one, but he only that is skilled that way can teach the ignorant; they that know not letters themselves, and are not skilful in a mystery, can never teach others; therefore it is but vain to seek into such: the Spirit of God alone hath this skill, to teach the denial of ungodliness; all the world besides is to seek in it: the popish masters, like vaunting mountebanks, have set up a school of their own, and devised new rules out of the forge of their own brains, to compass this; to wit, single life, whippings, monastical solitariness, hideous apparations, and the terror of purgatory-flames, with crossings, and holy water, and a world of trash; by all which they rack and cruciate poor souls, and leave them desperate; but all this will never do it, because God is not with it; these being lessons that he never gave, neither did they ever come into his mind. Indeed their school is erected, and rules devised, not so much to teach, as to make a gain of their proselytes. Go therefore to Christ's school, where are ordinances instituted by himself, for the purpose to teach; but go not to human inventions, though ever so specious, or probable

to the eye. The blind men, you know, recovered their sight, and had their blindness cured, when they lay by the way side where Christ came; at other times, when they were out of Christ's way, some flashing they might have, but no cure; so the lame man, lying at the gate of the temple, gets his limbs, and is made to leap. This makes the church, in Cant. i. 7, 8, (being yet impotent) to move this seasonable query to Christ, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside?" Whereunto Christ makes answer, "If thou know not, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids by the shepherds' tents." They that shun the means, and come not to God's ordinances, must needs remain ungodly persons, and be mere strangers to the denial of ungodliness; though I do not say, that the mere coming to them, is sufficient to be taught this.

2. There must be an intensive attendance on these ordinances, which is a serious and earnest bending of the mind, with all a man's might, to the lectures of the spirit: to make one a scholar, is requisite, not only going to school, but also minding his book, and his master's instructions: he that gives not his mind to it, shall never attain it; much more is this giving of our minds to the teaching of the Spirit requisite, that we may be taught by him, all the lessons being supernatural, and above the reach of common reason; they are all paradoxes to nature; they are mysteries of so high a strain, that will put even teachers of Israel to a stand; the very disciples of Christ, as well as Nicodemus, were at a loss; when Christ reads his lectures, they are very riddles: now you know that the more mystical and intricate any science is, the more wary and heedful must the mind be that will learn it; hence it is that the Lord so often inculcates an attending, *lest we let any thing slip*: you may find likewise, that such as have been taught by the Spirit, have been still attentive; as the Jews in Nehemiah's time, when the book of the law was distinctly read, and the sense given, so that the people *were caused to understand*, Neh. viii. 3—9, the text saith, "That the ears of all the people were attentive, and they wept." So when God opened the heart of Lydia, the text saith, *She attended to the things spoken of by Paul*, Acts xvi. 14. So Christ's hearers were very attentive to hear him, or did hang

upon him, as the margin reads it. This attentiveness is sometimes called, *an inclining of the ear*, sometimes a regarding and marking; sometimes a comparing of things together, or pondering or weighing of them, which was the attention of those of Berea, who made a *scrutiny or search*, Acts xvii. 11. Certainly this careless heedlessness, and not minding either the outward or inward lectures of the Spirit, but (according to the proverb) having a wool-gathering mind, is one great cause of so much non-proficiency in the school of Christ, and of such idiotism in the mystery of denying ungodliness, and in all other divine mysteries; so that of many we may say, as Paul of some of the Hebrews, "Whereas, for the time, they might even be teachers, they have yet need that we teach again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and have still need of milk, and not strong meat;" even as careless boys hardly get beyond their letters in the time they might have been able to read well, had they but minded their books. Would you then be taught this lesson to deny ungodliness? Regard and mark well with a busy mind, what the Spirit saith to the churches; for that is properly to have an ear to hear; ponder, therefore, and lay up his saying in your hearts; thus was the Virgin Mary taught. The letting of the thoughts be scattered, and forage in every bye corner; gazings on every object that is presented, leave but a sottish carcase in the place, as far to seek as at the first: thus attention is necessary to teaching, but it is not sufficient; for many attend, but receive not instruction.

3. Therefore, to be taught this lesson to deny ungodliness by the Spirit of God, requires submission, not to contradict his principles, or rules, but subscribe to them, and take them for granted: he that will be still cavilling with his master, saying, This is not a true rule, and that will not hold current, he shall never be taught by him till he will yield. There are too many in the world of this humour, they will deny principles, either contradicting them, or they will not receive them, except they be proved; now it is impossible that such an one should be taught; for, in all sciences whatsoever, there are some principles that can have no other demonstration than a native light, or good authority, by which matters depending on that science must be confirmed and proved: therefore 'tis a rule in all arts, *contra principia negantem non est disputandum*; there is no dealing

with a man that denies principles; yet in human science the firmest are but natural principles, which in respect of nature's obscurity, and mutability, may possibly be subject to error; nevertheless they must be received, because they are instructible, or else there is no learning such a science; much more necessary, therefore, is it, that the learners of divine mysteries (and this of denying ungodliness among the rest) that they contradict not, nor reject divine principles, nor yet expect any rational demonstration of them; for no science builds on faith as divinity doth; partly because the authority on which they depend, to wit, the Lord's appointment, is infallible, and cannot deceive, so that for this cause they are more free from exception, and are more firm, than what hath ever so manifest demonstration, in itself: for example, the shield of faith quencheth the fiery darts of ungodliness, and purifieth the heart from it. Godly sorrow works up a zeal against it, and stirs up indignation and vehement desire to be rid of it: the word of God *is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword*, to pare it from the soul, and to rip up the odious poison of it, being applied by faith against it; these, with others, are infallible principles taught by the Spirit of God; and he that will learn this lesson, must not dispute the certain efficacy of them, much less contradict or reject them as vain and frivolous; if learners will take upon them to controul, or teach their teacher, the Spirit of God, they may be ever learning, but shall never come to the knowledge of the truth, or be skilful in divine practice; the loose despising atheist shall remain an atheist still; and the proud deviser of new, though more rigid, courses, leaving the principles of the Spirit, may rack his brain, and macerate his body, but ungodliness shall dwell with him still. The humble learners of the Spirit of God are the greatest proficients; "The meek are they he will teach his way," Psa. xxv. 9. "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Doubtless our Saviour, when he tells us, *That except we become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, principally means an uncontradicting teachableness; with whom all go for unquestionable maxims taught; they never dispute whether they be right or no; I say not this, as if every word ministers speak must go for an oracle, but what the Spirit of God speaks out of the word of God.

4. Be not discouraged at the harshness and uncouthness of the lessons the Spirit sets you at first; in all sciences, the first lessons are hardest, they seem to be an indissoluble knot; the way is more tedious, because the path is yet rough, and not trodden smooth; after a little use, it will be a great deal more easy; even as Greek seems a harsh language, almost impossible to be learned at first entrance into it, yet in a little time it comes on smoothly: in like manner the instructions of the Spirit to deny ungodliness, seem very crabbed at first; flesh and blood cannot brook them; they are rough in the handling like new tools, till a little use hath made them plain and smooth; the rules of denying ungodliness were thus uncouth to all, even the best proficients, at first; none ever learned the art, that break not through the first and sharpest brunt with difficulty; it was a galling yoke at first, but in time Christ made it easy to them, and so will he to thee certainly: if mere use can make harshest lessons easy, heavy burthens, not only tolerable, but lightsome also, and often treading makes the roughest ways smooth; as long imprisonment will take away much of the bitterness of it, and the like; much more will the divine supernatural help of grace make the harsh lecture of denying ungodliness easy, nay, a recreation: fresh soldiers at first take arms with heavy hearts, but after a little experience the sound of drums and trumpets calling to battle, is music in their ears; especially when the general makes them see the certain advantages, then they set light by the brunt, or a few knocks.

The next point that the text affordeth to us is this, *That the grace of God teacheth such as are saved by it to deny worldly lusts.* We shall be the more brief in opening this point, because many branches hereof were fully opened in the last; here we shall have no more to do but to consider, what are worldly lusts, which are to be denied. In the clearing whereof St. John will give us light, who reduceth them to three heads; to wit, “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; they are not of the Father, but of the world;” so then, to know what worldly lusts are, we must search a little into these three particulars.

1. What is meant by the lust of the flesh. The flesh, when lust is ascribed to it, is taken three ways; sometimes mystically for the whole corrupted part of man, or so much as lies under

the law and power of sin, and is opposed to the regenerate part of man, which is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost ; so the apostle understands it in that passage, “ The flesh lusteth against the spirit :” the lust of the flesh, thus understood, are all inordinate and irregular motions and inclinations whatsoever, springing from the fountain, man’s depraved and polluted nature, and are opposed to injections from without, whether of Satan, or any external objects ; for some sinful motions have their original immediately from a man’s self, without derivation or dependance from, or upon, any other cause ; and, in some respect, or in regard of some inordinate inclination, man is a cistern that receives polluted waters from other heads ; as when Satan tempts, or outward baits entice ; but most sinful inclinations have their seeds within a man’s self, and many weeds grow up from the nature of the soil, without any sowing : an exact distinguishing of these internal natural lusts of the flesh, from Satan and the world’s injections, hath not yet been reached by any that I can find, because Satan doth so mix his injections with our natural inclinations. But St. James is very clear in the thing, that the flesh hath proper lusts of its own ; “ Every man is tempted (saith he) when he is drawn aside of his own lusts.” Now these kinds of lusts, as well as others, may well be called worldly, partly, as they are worldly men with whom they reign ; partly also, as they have their being in this world only : the denial or resistance of these, the grace of God teacheth to such as shall be saved.

Sometimes again, flesh is taken synecdochically, to wit, a part for the whole. And so the flesh imports that branch of corrupt nature, from whence spring, in particular, inordinate, unclean motions, or lascivious inclinations to adultery, fornication, and such like ; so St. Jude takes it, speaking of some that “ gave themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh ; these filthy dreamers defile the flesh ;” Jude vii. 8, that is, defile themselves with uncleanness. More plainly St. Peter, speaking of men that walk after the lusts of uncleanness, “ They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness.” Flesh thus considered as the fountain of uncleanness, the lusts of it are unclean inclinations, desires, delights, and pleasing contemplations therein : thus must our Saviour’s speech be understood, “ He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her,

hath committed adultery?" only note, that an inclination to propagation is not simply sinful; for God himself makes marriage, simply considered in itself, honourable, and therefore reputes not all such desires absolutely sinful, but the inordinate desires, or lusts after the flesh, doth the grace of God teach to deny.

Flesh sometimes is taken naturally for the body of a man, and then the lusts of it are all inordinate desires, after such things as please the body, as meat, drink, raiment, means of health, and welfare of it in any kind; this inordinate desire is not of the Father, but of the world; this lust of the flesh our Saviour labours to suppress; "I say unto you, take no thought what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on," Mat. vi. 25, 34; "And take no thought for to-morrow." That is, be not either over solicitous with distraction, to the cruciating or disquieting yourselves hereby; or be not excessively greedy of these things, or for any thing more than is needful. So that this kind of lust consists of two branches; 1. When our desires and cares are so extreme and turbulent about these things as make us neglect, forget, or slight better things. 2. When they become a burthen and torture to us. 3. When they keep not within any fit limits or bounds. As for example; this is the lust of the flesh, that is, of the world, when our heart is so taken up with the desire of food, raiment, health, that we disturb ourselves about them, and mind nothing so much, or so eagerly, as making provision for them neglecting or undervaluing the food, raiment, and health of our souls: so likewise when our desires are not content with food and raiment that is convenient, but are aspiring to superfluity, even to more, for quantity and variety, than will serve the turn; or, to what is better, finer, and more delicate, than what is needful; so a gluttonous, drunken, gorgeous desire, comes under this kind of the lusts of the flesh; as also impatience in sickness, both in respect of the continuance of it, or the lack of such remedies, or means, which we conceive may recover us.

2. Another sort of worldly lusts to be denied are, as St. John speaks, *The lusts of the eye*; and they are conversant about the things which by the eye the heart is over-affected with; and they are things that are our neighbour's, and not our own; or things that are our own. These, as they are conversant about our neighbour, are any thing that is his. Perhaps thine eye

beholds the beauty and conveniency of thy neighbour's house ; the goodly, useful, rich furniture ; the rarity, pleasantness, fruitfulness, good situation, and abundance of his lands ; the plenty and variety of his fare ; the strength, good qualities, and serviceableness of his attendants ; the amiableness, good disposition, meekness, helpfulness of his wife. Now there may be a two-fold lust of the eye. 1. Enviousness of heart at him, because of these good things which thine eye beholds : the apostle tells us of " the spirit of a man, that lusts to envy ;" this envious lust of the eye must be denied, and grace alone will teach the denial of it. Or, 2. The eye lusts after these when the sight of them stirs up a wishing them to be his own ; so Ahab lusted for Naboth's vineyard, and Absalom for his father's kingdom.

3. Another sort of worldly lusts, he calls *pride of life* ; now this is thinking of ourselves above what is meet, for any thing in the world, spiritual or natural gifts ; as knowledge, utterance, skill, feature, proportion, strength, or the like ; or riches, friends, parentage, place, titles, office ; when any bear themselves loftily, scornfully, with over-topping conceits, slighting others ; this is a kind of ambitious lust, seeking its own exaltation above measure*.

Now grace will teach, though not utterly to vanquish, yet to deny these ; it will teach as a monitor, or a remembrancer, when they begin to stir ; and be as a secret voice, giving warning of an insurrection in the soul, that it may prepare for an encounter in the beginning of the mutiny, before it hath got a head. Again, grace teacheth to deny these, by infusing divine skill to get the best advantages of them. There is no worldly lust, but hath a fair pretext to cover its vileness ; as covetousness is called good husbandry, drunkenness good fellowship, pride is handsomeness, oppression is seeking a man's own, uncleanness is called love, and the like ; whereby the soul is got asleep, as Dalilah did Sampson, till it is betrayed into the hands of Satan ; but, through grace, the Spirit of God discovers this mark or vizard of lust, and leaves it open in its own ugliness. They that are taught of God cannot be cozened with all the cunning insinuations, and fair glosses lust covers itself with ; they appear through the thickest mists, what they truly are : the lambskin shall not be able to hide the wolfishness in lust. The Spirit gives them such a quick

piercing eye, as to see through all the colourable pretences, which insight all the world is not able to procure, but only the Spirit of God, through grace; even as none but the Lord discovered the wife of Jeroboam to Abijah the prophet, when she came to him in a disguise, 1 Kings xiv. 5, 6. We descry and discover in our ministry the secret treachery, and hidden poison of lust; but not one of a hundred takes notice thereof, or will believe our report, but only such as (besides that) hear, and are inwardly convinced by the secret illumination of the Spirit; which is as great an advantage as the Israelites had of the Syrians, when the prophet still revealed the consultations their king held in his bed-chamber*.

Again, the Spirit, by grace, gives this advantage by teaching where the strength of lust lies; what provision pampers and fattens it; how every lust hath its proper fuel or pasture, to keep it in growth; and that the deceitful heart, and treacherous porters the senses, are secretly in league with lust, to steal out, at every opportunity, to forage for its provision, and to bring it in. As for instance, the Spirit discovers, that unclean lusts have strength from excess of meat and drink, too much familiarity with loose persons, filthy discourse, wanton dalliance, obscene books; this will make a spark grow to a flame, and a hunger-starved lust grow fat and mighty; and that the filthy heart by musing, the lustful eye by prying, the wanton ear by listening, bring in this fuel. I say, the Spirit of grace makes a full discovery, that by these means lust comes to be so strong, and in so full plight; some glimmering fancies man may have hereof, without the effectual work of the Spirit, but a convincing and affecting discovery is only by that. But he stays not in discovering where the strength lies, but teaches how to abate and weaken it; namely, by cutting off this provision, and shortening lust of his allowance, and keeping a strict guard and watch over these treacherous favourers of it; as the grooms taking away a horse's provender, soon makes him leave and abate his courage. The Spirit puts the soul on this practical part of policy, as a general not only tells his soldiers, they must intercept the provision that may feed the besieged city, and fall on the convoys; but he marches out before them, and puts them on the project, and breaks the way for them; and as Dalilah taught the Philistines how to weaken Sampson,

* 2 Kings vi. 12.

herself breaking the ice for them, cutting off his locks. All the rudiments in the world cannot, are not, sufficient instructions to overcome lust of this strength, but the Spirit. Some austere spirits have dealt very rigidly with themselves to weaken this strength of lust; witness St. Jerom, who relates his case himself, speaking of fasting, and other harsh means, for weakening lust, he says, by his own bitter experience, that of themselves they have no efficacy, but rose and increased the more*. Nothing, therefore, no not the use of God's own means, can avail to the weakening of lust, except the effectual operations of the Spirit strike the stroke; and from this must the effectual discovery and abatement of the strength of whatsoever lust be fetched.

We have done with the two great hydras, ungodliness, and worldly lusts, whose heads grace takes off for such as are saved by it; which having thus cleared the coast, and made the passage free from devourers, the same grace leads them to God's green pastures, that therein they may be fat and well-liking; where it takes care of three things, that they may be complete. 1. In respect of themselves, that they may lie down quietly without disturbance. 2. In respect of others, that they may not be offensive, but useful to them. 3. In respect of God, that they may be fit for their master's use, and delightful in his eye.

The first care of the grace of God, which concerns believers themselves, is to teach and win them to sobriety, whereby they may undisturbedly enjoy themselves with comfort. The doctrine is, that the grace of God teacheth such, as shall be saved, to live soberly; wherein let us consider, 1. What sobriety is. 2. What it is to live soberly. 3. How grace teaches it.

1. Sobriety sometimes is taken strictly for a temperate and moderate use of meat and drink, without excess, and is opposed to gluttony and drunkenness; but, most frequently in scripture, it is of a far larger extent, and is understood of a general moderation in all things we have to do with; thus St. Paul understands temperance, which is all one with sobriety; "Every man that striveth, (saith he), is temperate, (or sober) in all things;" 1 Cor. ix. 25. In this general sense it is to be understood in this place; for the apostle you see coucheth all which

* *Quoties ego ipse in cremo constitutus, &c. Libidinum incendia bulliebant.* Hieron. *ad Eustoch. de custodia virginitatis.* Fol. 47. A.B. Tom. I.

concerns a man's self, in an orderly conversation, under this one virtue, sobriety. In general, it is an universal moderating a man's self, or keeping himself in due limits in all things whatsoever he hath to do with ; and it answers that rule of the apostle " Let your moderation be known to all men," which he expounds in the next verse, " Be careful for nothing ;" that is, be so indifferent in the use of all the things of this world, that nothing may distract you. This sobriety, or temperate moderation is twofold ; 1. Internal. 2. External. The former is a sobriety of the mind ; the latter of the conversation. Give me leave to clear these to you, that the latitude may appear ; and first for the sobriety of the mind. Note, for the foundation of what I have to say, that the apostle is very clear, that there is a sobriety in the mind, and that he intends such in the text. For in ver. 7, he requires sobermindedness, and the text is an encouragement to it, from the efficacy of grace to compass it : writing to the Romans he speaks to the same purpose, " I say, through the grace of God given to me, to every man that is among you, to think soberly, as God hath dealt to every man," Rom. xii. 3. Now thinking, (you know) is an act of the mind, consider we, therefore, what the sobriety of mind is.

(1.) It consists in the moderation of its inquisition ; that is, the mind in its search or inquiry into things keeps itself within due limits, and wades not deeper than its reach. As the eye is not satisfied with seeing, so (many times) the mind is not contented or satisfied with prying into hidden or concealed secrets : but it is a good rule, *Noli altum sapere*. The Holy Ghost gives a good reason of it, " Secret things belong to God, but revealed things to us." A man may be too saucy, and go beyond sobriety in attempting to uncover either the things of God, which he hath locked up in the hidden closet of his own breast ; or the things of men, which are fit to be reserved to themselves. As for example ; the unity of the divine nature, and trinity of persons ; the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost ; the conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost ; the election and reprobation of particular persons, clasped and sealed up in the reserved books of life and death ; these, and many the like, are secrets, wherein the sobriety of the mind, as an awful bridle, should hold in the career of man's inquisitiveness, and bound his itching humour which would be prying ; the

setting bounds to the mount where God descended, and the charge to the people not to dare to make an approach, was a type of this sobermindedness. Howbeit many will not be satisfied, but are so given to enquiry, that faith must be justled out by sense and reason; nothing is true with them but what by rational search they can find out to be so: but one of the ancient suits such unsoberminded men well, *Scrutator majestatis opprimetur à gloria*: a man may look so boldly on the sun as he may not only dazzle but blind his eyes, or unawares fall into a ditch; let this then be the first branch of sobriety of mind, to be moderate in our inquiries, and be content to search only into things allowed to be known, being what is revealed.

(2.) Sobriety of mind consists in the moderation of our judgment; this stands, (1.) In the deliberateness of it. Deliberate judgment is opposed to a rash or over-hasty one; when a man will conclude things before he hath well weighed the premises, or circumstances inferring such a conclusion. It is a kind of drunkenness of men to make a judgment hand over head, or blindfold; but sober minds judge deliberately; they will see good cause for what they determine; they will do a thing so, as that they may not be forced to undo it again for lack of consideration. (2.) A sober judgment is according to knowledge; when a man judgeth no farther of any thing that he can understand it. As it is the property of drunkards to do they know not what, so is it of a drunken mind void of sobriety. What St. Jude saith of speaking, is as true of judging evil; he tells us of some, whom he ranks with brute beasts, that speak, (yea) and judge evil of things they know not. (3.) A man hath a sober judgment when he is not too peremptory and stiff in his opinion, but submits to better judgments. 4. Sobriety of judgment stands in thinking of a man's self, and others, according as God hath dealed to every man; in this St. Paul declares the soberness of his mind or judgment; "We dare not compare ourselves with some that commend themselves," &c. 2 Cor. x. 12. "We will not boast of things beyond our measure." All high thoughts and over-weaning of a man's own parts, or gifts, above what is meet, together with all under-valuing of others, are void of sobriety; but a true sobriety is apt to think better of another than himself, because he sees more defects of his own, than he doth of another; but I make it not a rule: for a man may know

something of himself, and others, that may, with sobriety, admit of thinking better of himself.

3. A sober mind consists in the moderation or good temper of the heart; now the heart is thus sober when it keeps itself in a mediocrity, and breaks not out into excess; as a man is said in the vulgar sense to be sober, when he drinks not excessively, but only as much as will suffice. This sobriety of heart stands in the moderation of his will and affection; there is a kind of drunkenness in the heart of man, when it is insatiable; and that, (1.) In the imperiousness of it, that it must not be crossed in any thing, but will swallow all that is pleasing to his appetite, though it be never so unreasonable and prejudicial; a sober will confines itself to things lawful, honest, and expedient, and bridles in itself to what agrees not therewith. (2.) The heart is drunk and unsatiable, when the desires thereof are excessive. As namely, 1. When they are turbulent, disquieting and distracting the heart; as a man is drunk when he drinks so much as distempers the body. It was a drunkenness in Rachel's heart, that she was so turbulently desirous of children, that she cries out, "Give me children, or else I die;" so of Ahab's, that was so desirous of Naboth's vineyard, that he is sick for it. Sober desires are such as leave the heart in a quiet temper still. 2. Drunken desires of the heart are, when they are never satisfied, nor know when they have enough; but the more they have the more they crave still, which is a right property of vulgar drunkenness. Sober desires (I mean of earthly things,) sail so low, and aim at so few and short marks, and that with such indifferency, as that a very little satisfies and gives contentment: a sober heart is far from enlarging her desires, as hell, the grave, or a barren womb, which ever cry, give, give. 3. The desires of the heart are drunken when they are impatient and outrageous, if crossed; as none more mad than drunkards, if they cannot have presently what drink they call for; when men fret, and chafe, hang the lip, are sullen, and mal-content, if their desires be frustrate, such are drunken desires, that heart is not sober: I might as easily shew you a like drunkenness in all the affections and passions; but it shall suffice at present to consider, that affections so far swerve from sobriety, as they are transported beyond their bounds, in any excess whatsoever.

2. There is an external sobriety, and that is of the conversa-

tion, which consists in a moderate, temperate use of all things, for clearing whereof, note, this sobriety is not so much a mere abstinence from excess, as a refraction or restraint of a man's self from all manner of excess; which implies some appetite or inclination to break out beyond bounds, and a curbing a man's self by a kind of compulsive restraint, which is self-denial. There is a great difference between abstinence, and forbearance of a thing, which a man hath no humour or power unto; and sobriety, as it is a virtue which presupposeth a vice, enticing the contrary way. As for example, suppose wine be loathsome to a man, his abstinence is not sobriety properly; but being inclined thereto, and strongly enticed, he puts a knife to his throat, and compels himself to forbear, in spite of all provocations; this is a virtuous sobriety: this certainly is that which the grace of God teacheth: for teaching implies a man has yet to seek, and hath not attained the thing to be taught; whereas there is no need of teaching that which a man cannot naturally choose but follow. This sobriety consists of many branches, as the bridling and moderating a man's appetite, having provocations of excessive eating and drinking, which our Saviour calls a *taking heed, lest our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*. Of this Solomon speaks, "If thou art set at a great man's table, and be a man given to appetite, set a knife to thy throat:" and, "Be not among wine bibbers, neither tarry long at the wine." This sobriety of the appetite is a moderate use of the creatures; that is, such an use as serves for health, and the better disposing and enabling a man to all good and lawful offices towards God and men; and it stands in the midst of two extremes, defect and excess. The defect is the pinching a man's self, not allowing himself what is needful. Such, though they think themselves the soberest men, being remotest from excess, yet they err too much on the other hand to be sober men; it is a certain rule, *In medio consistit virtus*. The other extreme is excess, much more in use than the former, and that in quality or quantity; excess in quantity is eating or drinking more than is meet; in quality, when men content not themselves with that which is good and wholesome nourishment, befitting their several ranks and places, and are grown over-dainty, and despise that which is not rare: sobriety in this kind is no certain stint, but extends or dilates, according to the

diversity of men's tempers and ranks ; one man of a weak brain and sickly stomach, may exceed the bounds of sobriety in use of the same quantity of meat or drink, which another of a stronger temper may use with sobriety ; that which will but quench the thirst of one man, may make another man's head light : that meat which will but satisfy one man's nature, and harden it for labour, may overcharge and dull another ; that variety and daintiness which doth but beseem a man's table of ability and good rank, is profuse lavishness and wasteful expence to a meaner person. In sum, then, a man exceeds sobriety, either when he uses the creature beyond that conveniency his temper requires, or the means God hath given him.

Besides this vulgar sobriety, there is a sobriety also of speech, whereof St. Paul speaks in his defence before Festus, Acts xxvi. 25, " I speak the words of truth and soberness." Which sobriety consists, (1.) In soft words. (2.) In few words. (3.) In seasonable words. Add hereto a sobriety in behaviour, which is a mild and grave carriage, without either loftiness or vain levity : finally, there is also a sobriety in a man's dealing, in buying and selling ; in buying, when a man keeps within his compass, and wades not beyond his depth, either of skill or ability ; and in selling, when a man is moderate in his gains, and works not on the necessity of persons ; but these heads shall suffice, that we may keep some moderation in handling of this point.

The next thing is, what it is to live soberly. 1. This phrase intimates an activity of sobriety ; living here is put for exercise ; it is not enough to have power to be sober, though that be necessary, but this power must be reduced into act, as occasion serves ; for it is a good rule, *Frustra fit potentia, quæ non reducitur in actum*. 2. It intimates a continuation in sobriety ; this, and the whole life must go hand-in-hand together, or, a man must be sober all his life ; one act doth not make up a living soberly, as one swallow doth not make a summer ; and it should be as precious to a man as his life ; if any solicit him to intemperance, he should say, Bereave me of sobriety, bereave me of my life too ; what will it avail me to live, and not live soberly ?

The last thing to be considered is, how grace teacheth to live soberly. To clear this, note, grace teacheth, 1. By instruction, giving rules for the thing, clearly making us to understand and

know, that sobriety is a duty enjoined, and must be observed. Philosophers, it is true, from the glimmerings of natural light, give rules to teach this, as well as other moral virtues ; but they fail in the ground-work or foundation of their rules, making right reason the foundation, and deriving the power of sobriety from the heroical resoluteness of man's spirit ; whereas the will of God is the ground-work, and the power to be sober is from his might. They fail in the end of sobriety, making that the ultimate, which is but the subordinate, wholly neglecting the chief end, being ignorant thereof. Their chief end is, by moderation, to enjoy themselves, and the praise of men, whereas it should be the glory of God. In these two things the teaching of sobriety, by grace, differs from the natural teaching of it, for grace makes God the ground-work of it, and his power, in man's weakness, the efficient cause of it, and the glorifying God the final inducing cause of sobriety. 2. Grace not only teaches it, by giving good rules, but also by such a winning rhetorical illustration of the excellency of sobriety, as to catch her learners with an enamoured love thereto ; in teaching, it makes her learners, though enemies at first to such doctrine, say, (as once the catchpoles that were sent to trap Christ) *Never man spake as he speaks*. The lips of grace, through a secret divine eloquence, drop honey. 3. Not only by enamouring, but by drawing also. The teaching of grace hath the virtue of a loadstone, that draws adjacent metal to fasten to itself ; it is like the power reported to be in the Syrens' songs, which will make a man leave all to dance after their notes. In this, especially, it goes infinitely beyond the acutest teaching in the world besides ; for her learners cannot, for their hearts, say nay.

Use 1. Seeing grace hath appeared, or is come into our quarters, teaching to live soberly, let us show our breeding by our proficiency under so excellent a tutor : the excellency of skill and parts in a tutor adds much to the shame of a dunce, or non-proficient, that hath been trained up under such an one ; for that it is expected they should excel answerably, according to the extraordinary helps they have had. Shall philosophers, and moral heathens, that have had their breeding but in the twilight of nature, be more exact scholars in sobriety, than Christians, that have lain at the right fountain, and been bred in the academy of grace ? Shall persons living in darkness, without any light of

the gospel shining unto them, live more soberly than they to whom the light of the gospel shines most gloriously? What a shame is this? If a clown, or ignoramus, should pose an university-man in the arts he hath been long bred up in, would it not make him blush? Much more may they blush who have been long tutored by grace, to see untutored poor souls, that never scarce heard that there were any such thing as grace, yet to excel them in sobriety. Christ's verdict is, "That this is condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness better than light." St. Paul tells us, "That they who are drunk, are drunk in the night:" and adds, "Ye are not of the night, but the day."

Use 2. Doth grace teach to live soberly? Then are they graceless wretches, or come short of the grace of God, that do not live soberly; nor can they rightly claim a part or portion in the great privilege of salvation which grace teacheth. It is a fearful sentence, and dismal doom, I confess, though too true; and too few, whom it most concerns, lay it to heart; if they would, it might be a happy bridle to restrain all immoderate excess. Oh! that such, who give themselves to excess, would but give their eyes unto, and seriously ponder, in their hearts, the many fearful words pronounced against them by that word which shall judge them at the last day! As that of Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30, "Who hath woe, who hath sorrow, who hath contention, who hath wounds? They that tarry long at the wine; they that seek new wine." He doth not say, they that are stark drunk, as men now count drunkenness, but they that tarry long at it, though they have strong pates to carry it away; at least he saith, "It bites like a serpent." The prophet Isaiah seconds him, and takes off a foolish excess of men, that think themselves out of Solomon's gun-shot, because they drink not wine; "Woe (saith he) unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until wine inflame them. And woe to them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," Isa. v. 11, 12—22. He scatters his woes among all sorts, whether wine-bibbers, or strong-drink-bibbers. The prophet Habakkuk makes up the peal, and meets with another sort of excess: "Woe to him (saith he) that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunk, that thou mayest look on

his nakedness," Hab. ii. 15. What canst thou now say for thyself, O poor wretch! that leavest not only christianity, but also manhood in thy cups, and transformest thyself into a beast, nay worse? Wilt thou say, Christ is thy Saviour? Alas! this text takes thee quite off from this hold; for that grace of his, that brings salvation, teacheth to live soberly, and this thou learnest not; therefore canst thou not lay claim to the other. Oh! be wise betimes, and consider the desperateness of thy condition, as God himself judgeth of it, and be not deluded with the daubings of such as count thee a good fellow.

Use 3. It is then a most fearful presumption for any person, in confidence of his own strength, to adventure himself into the mouth of danger, where he may be induced, or tempted, to exceed the bounds of sobriety; for if sobriety be of grace, then is it not of a man's own strength. There are too many in the world so well conceited of their own abilities, as that they fear no colours; they will warrant you they do well enough, and can keep themselves within compass, and therefore dare put themselves into any hazard. Some think themselves so wise, as they fear not to wade into God's secrets too deep; they can stint their reasonings and thoughts at pleasure. Some dare loosen the reins, and let them run career, fondly dreaming they can curb them at will. Phaeton like; they can dote on the world, and think it cannot enthrall them; they can let their rage loose like a fierce mastiff, and chain it up again at a beck. Others are so confident of their power to contain, that though they let their eyes loose to look on a maid, their tongues loose to obscene filthy ribaldry, their ears to lascivious discourse and solicitations, to bewitching dalliances, and their thoughts to contemplative uncleanness; yet they have such a strength of continency, that no such pitch can defile them; they are not so weak or so silly as to be trapped in the snare; and, therefore, they will not abridge themselves of such liberty. In a word, others are confident of the strength of their brain, that none can fox them; but let such consider, that to live soberly is not in man's power, but only of grace; and, therefore, it is just with God to give up such to be overtaken for neglecting his aid, as he served Noah, David, and others. Hence the apostle Paul adviseth to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his* (not our) *might*; and when he speaks of his ability in moderation,

namely, that he is *able to do all things*, he concludes, that it is not by his own strength, but Christ's that strengthened him. Blessed is the man *that feareth always*, (that is) himself; suspecting his own shallowness and weakness, considering the bewitching insinuations that are in temptations of this nature. Know, therefore, that whoever is endued with a sober mind and behaviour, it comes with all other good gifts from above, and he is kept herein by the power of God, and the sufficiency of his grace, without which he is as impotent as the weakest; therefore, in this, and in all other matters, let every man commit himself to the custody of God, and the power of his grace, and not lean to his own strength. Though Paul was a man full of the Spirit, and had attained a great measure of moderation, yet dares he not rely thereon, but entrusts God and his grace to keep him: *not I*, (saith he (*but the grace of God which is in me*)). How frequently doth he close up his epistles, after all his endeavours, with this epilogue, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen. Grace, mercy, and peace, be with you from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus." Ply grace therefore in this behalf, which shall be sufficient; "for its strength shall be perfected in your weakness."

The next point is, that grace teacheth to live righteously. This is of a large extent, comprehending the whole duty of man to man, and in substance is the same with that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" which love he calls *fulfilling of the law*. There are two main branches of it, justice and mercy; justice is a rendering to every one his due, or an upright inoffensive walking towards every one, without partiality or fraud. Give me leave to anatomize this branch of righteousness a little, that you may the better see the lineaments thereof: for as he cannot be a good physician, or chirurgion, fit to apply apt remedies to distempered parts, or set bones, that is not well insighted in anatomy; so neither can a man aptly apply cures to distempers of injustice, that is not somewhat insighted into the parts of justice; he must know the proper joints of justice, that, in case of dislocation, he may reduce them to their proper place again: know therefore that righteousness, so far as it brancheth itself into justice, is divers, according to the diversity of men's relations of superiority, or inferiority, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, parents and children. The

righteousness of a magistrate stands in an impartial and equal rendering rewards, or punishments; all unevenness, either too much rigour, or too much lenity, is injustice. Subjects are to yield obedience, both internal and external, to their lawful commands, and quiet suffering their penalties, if for conscience sake you cannot obey their commands; "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, and openeth not the mouth." So for ministers, their righteousness is in withholding none of the counsel of God, being instant in season and out of season; giving every one his portion, with soundness of doctrine, cheerfulness of spirit, humbleness of mind; patient waiting, if God will at any time bring men to repentance; and not for filthy lucre. The people's justice is to seek advice and help of the minister, to unbind their consciences when sin hath chained them up, in attending upon all the ordinances of God; giving them due respect, praying for them, that they may do their work powerfully and fruitfully.

The husband's justice is, 1. *To love his wife, as Christ loved the church.* 2. To govern wisely as a head, not imperiously, much less tyrannically. 3. To provide for her. 4. As a covering to shelter her. The wife's justice stands, 1. In love also, 2. In subjection to all lawful and expedient things he requires. 3. In helpfulness in all things she can reach unto. 4. In covering infirmities. 5. In reverencing him as the head.

The master's justice is, 1. In imposing no more labour on his servant, than his strength can bear. 2. To inflict no more punishment than his offence deserves. 3. To detain no maintenance requisite; as food, rest, refreshment, and wages. 4. To encourage them in well doing. 5. To instruct them in the knowledge of God, and endeavouring to bring them to his ordinances. The justice of servants is, 1. In doing their utmost, without laziness, in their allotted business. 2. Not wasting or purloining. 3. Obeying all lawful commands. 4. Being faithful in what is committed to their trust. 5. Patiently bearing punishment, though wrongfully inflicted; not so much as answering again. 6. Contentment with their wages. 7. Not stealing away their master's time for their own occasions without licence.

The justice of parents is, 1. To get children in lawful matrimony. 2. To provide for them, both soul and body, in a moderate way. 3. Not to provoke them to bitterness. 4. To correct

them in measure, and in due time. The justice of children is,
 1. To honor their parents. 2. To become subject to them, as
 Christ did. 3. To be obedient and dutiful.

Finally, there is an occasional justice, and that is an upright
 behaviour toward all men, with whom we have to do upon any
 occasion, as in buying or selling, lending or borrowing: now
 all this is privative or positive; in innocency, in offensiveness,
 peaceableness; so in doing right, and giving to every one their
 own. 1. Innocency stands in a harmless conversation, or, in
 the apostle's phrase, "A walking without offence;" which con-
 sists in offering no violence, in purpose or act, either to a man's
 person, goods, name, or whatever is his, though a man hath
 power, opportunity, or provocation thereunto; nay, though
 some occasion may be given according to our Saviour's rule,
 "render to no man evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but
 rather bless them that curse." 2. This innocent justice consists
 in not defrauding or over-reaching, but in fair, honest, and
 true dealing without undermining, or smothering evil under fair
 pretences. 3. In laying aside all malice, envy, and hatred,
 false surmises, hard conceits, backbitings, and all evil-speak-
 ing; in a word, it consists in doing no manner of harm, but
 a blameless walking, such as was commended in Zachary and
 Elizabeth.

Peaceableness, which is another branch of justice, consists in
 making peace, and endeavouring to reconcile differences, not
 blowing coals that are kindled, which is the property of a make-
 bate; to this our Saviour pronounceth blessedness, Matt. v. It
 lies in entertaining with readiness terms of peace, though with
 some disadvantage; being apt to reconciliation without turbu-
 lency, contention, needless suits, or inveterate implacableness:
 this our Saviour commends to his disciples, "My peace I leave
 with you;" of this kind of justice is putting up of injuries, and
 loving enemies: justice it is, for it is a debt in the apostle's
 judgment, as well as our Saviour's; "owe nothing to any man
 but to love one another." And it lies in living peaceably, with-
 out either giving or taking occasions of quarrel, as much as in a
 man lies, as the apostle says, "As much as in you lies, labour
 to have peace with all men." Finally, this justice lies in doing
 right to all men, giving to every one his due, "Tribute to
 whom tribute is due; love to whom love is due; fear to whom

fear, honour to whom honour." You see of how large an extent the first branch of righteousness is, to wit, justice.

The second branch is mercifulness to men; and this is internal or external. Internal consists in compassion or pity, which is opposed to hard-heartedness; this is a kind of fellow-feeling, or a being affected for another's distress; "For we are all members of one body;" therefore as members naturally sympathize one with another, so should we; which mercy the apostle much urgeth, and our Saviour presseth in the parable of the Samaritan, that had compassion on the wounded man; this tender-heartedness is a commendable virtue, and such as human society can scarce be conserved without; and lies in devising liberal things, which the prophet Isaiah mentions, "The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand." Two things are worth our observation in this internal merciful righteousness. It consists of a free and large heart to do good, and to shew kindness. There are niggardly, as well as contracted hearts, in the world; when men think every little too much, it is cutting to the heart to part with any thing. It comes from them gradually, and the heart murmurs and repines, when an occasion happens that he cannot handsomely avoid some charitable expence, which was the foul and killing error of Ananias and Sapphira; but a liberal heart is glad of opportunities to do much good, and is as well pleased in scattering plentifully, (according to ability, without corrupt or parsimonious pretences) as to reap abundantly; for which temper of heart David gives public praise to God; "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly?" This heart deviseth liberal things, it is projecting and contriving how to be liberal, when, where, and to whom to shew kindness.

External mercy is the venting of kindness, and this is either passive or active. The passive consists in long suffering, or patient putting up of injuries; when a man will be hardly provoked and easily intreated, he lets go advantages offered of requiting evil for evil, being ready to forgive offences; active mercy is an actual distribution as a man's own ability, and another's necessity require; this mercy, in the apostle's phrase, is *a doing good to all, especially to the household of faith*: the bounds of it are large, extending to all in need; enemies must

not be excluded; "If thine enemy hunger, give him bread; so shalt thou heap fire on his head;" it is excellent mercy to requite good for evil; only there is some difference to be observed, with respect of the persons to whom good is to be shewed; for the apostle adds and *especially to the household of faith*; wherein he intimates that God's faithful ones are to be preferred before others in shewing mercy; their failings are especially to be borne withal, to be favourably construed, and their necessities and wants are specially to be relieved; they must have the priority of mercy, and greatest share of relief: this mercifulness of man is so acceptable to God, that many times he will dispense with his own peculiar right to make way for it: "I will have mercy (saith God) and not sacrifice;" and he takes kindness shewed to him, as done to himself: "In that you have done it to the least of these (saith Christ) you have done it unto me." Finally, note, That this merciful righteousness spreads itself wide; it fastens on the soul, to communicate light to it, and heat; endeavouring to snatch some as firebrands out of the fire, by instruction, admonition, or warning; by reprehension, exhortation, and consolation; and all this with long suffering and meekness, "If, at any time, God will give them repentance." It descends also to the body to supply it with food and raiment convenient, with other helps that concern the health and strength of it; it proceeds to the credit, covering infirmities, vindicating from calumnies, but publishing deserts, that the name of a good man may be *as ointment poured forth*; it runs on to a man's substance, mercy will be helpful to his very beasts; yea, the beast of his enemy, which the Lord enjoins by Moses, to "bring it home if it straggle; to lift it up if sunk under a burthen." Thus have you the righteousness branched forth which grace teacheth. To live righteously is the same as to live soberly; grace teaches this. To wit, (1.) Magisterially, as a master teacheth his scholars, by rules and arguments. (2.) Imperiously, as a prince his subjects, with a binding authority. (3.) Persuasively, as a most skilful winning orator. (4.) Irresistibly, infusing the thing taught.

Use. Doth grace teach to live righteously? Learn, then, to disclaim that selfishness that too many adhere unto. There is an unsociable inhumane proverb in the world, too prevalent every where, "Every man for himself, and God for us all,"

whereas the very heathens, by the light of nature, confess, **That** we are not born for ourselves; “*Non solum nobis nati sumus,*” saith Tully; our country, prince, parents, children, challenge a just right to what lies in our power; the members of the body are not more engaged one to another, as well as each to itself, than men are to men. Learn, therefore, to render to every man his due, and *keep a conscience void of offence, as well towards men, as towards God*, which the apostle joyed in.

The next point, that grace teacheth, is to live godly. As all arts are subservient handmaids to divinity, and therefore are first learned; so all the former lessons of grace serve ultimately to make grace’s scholars complete in this last lesson of godliness; therefore grace teaches this last. This lesson comprehends the whole duty of man to God immediately, whatever is contained in the first table of the decalogue, which is exceeding vast and large. That we may be the better versed in this lesson let us consider, 1. What it is to live godly. 2. Why. 3. How. 4. When. It imports,

(1.) That we must make God our aim in all our ways.
(2.) That we prefer him before all things, making them give place to him. (3.) That we serve him in his own way.

1. To live godly, requires that the main end and scope of all our actions and passions must be fixed principally on God, for the advancing his glory and honour; thus the apostle expounds living godly, when he tells us, “We must live unto the Lord,” Rom. xiv. 6, 7, 8. Now, as a servant is said to live unto his master, when his eating, sleeping, recreating, and the rest, are intended for the fitting him for his master’s business, or the furthering his credit or benefit; so a man lives to the Lord, or lives godly, when all he doth is for the Lord; such a godly life is intimated to us in the talents the master gave to his servants, expecting a return with increase, Matt. xxv. 13, 15, 16. 1 Cor. vi. 19.

For the better illustration of this branch of godliness, I will shew you what it is to aim at God in our ways, how far it is requisite, and who err herein. It is nothing else but to do, or suffer things for God’s sake; making his good pleasure and glory the main loadstone to draw us forth to employment, and the great weight to set all the wheels of our several faculties

members a-going in their courses: the philosophers say
omne agit propter finem, especially man, who hath his

particular end in his choice and eye ; whereas other creatures incline to their end by a natural instinct : you shall have no man go about any thing, but he can tell you some persons or end he aims at ; doth he sleep ? his end is rest and ease ; doth he eat ? his end is to satisfy hunger ; doth he toil in the world ? his end is gain : now when a man in sleeping or eating propounds to himself the repairing of weakness, and the making him fresh to serve God ; when God is so in the eye, as his glory is the wind that fills the sails ; then doth he live godly, or unto the Lord ; which is the godly life the apostle requires, “ Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God ; ” but, some may say, doth a man live ungodly when he propounds, or aims at any other end, than God and his honour in his ways ; as namely, if he doth aim at gain in his labour ? Let it be considered, that there are ultimate and subordinate ends of men’s actions, the one subservient to the other ; and so of intentions, in which case the subordinate are a step to the ultimate. For instance, a man hath a dull knife, and whets it, there are two ends ; the next and subordinate end is to make it keen, the ultimate and special end is to make it serviceable ; here one end destroys not the other, if so be a man aims at each in its order. So for a man’s eating meat, or taking physic, the chiefest end of them is the fitting of persons in God’s work ; now, because health and nourishment, are requisite thereto, therefore the first subordinate end is health ; seeing then there are these two ends, it is not ungodliness to aim at the subordinate end, as well as the ultimate ; but godliness, as it hath both in its eye, so it makes that which is chiefest in its own nature, the chiefest in a man’s aim and intention. There is a double error against this branch of a godly life ; (1.) When men put the cart before the horse, as I may say, preferring natural subordinate ends before supernatural and ultimate ; as namely, when men do any thing for pleasure, more than to quicken dull spirits for God’s work. (2.) When men exclude the principal end, and make the natural end of things their sole loadstone ; as namely, to work only for gain, to give alms only for praise, to perform outward duties only to satisfy man’s law, or to be seen without any regard to God himself. (3.) When men aim at sinister, base, and corrupt ends, as unlawful gain, accomplishing their lust, and the like.

Use. He then that would live godly must ever fix his eye on the right mark, and take his aim to hit the white, “even the glorifying God in every action.” A man only so far lives to the Lord as he thus aims, and therefore should both fix his thoughts hercon, and contrive the fittest means hereto.

2. A godly life is, to prefer God before all things else, making them give place to him; which was David’s godliness, when he said, “Whom have I in heaven but thee,” &c. and the church’s, when speaking of Christ her beloved, she saith, “My beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand.” For illustration, consider we what this preferring God is; it may be considered simply or comparatively: preferring God simply before other things is no more but this, namely, that he hath the utmost extent of reverence, respect, esteem, love, and submission, the soul can possibly extend unto; for if any of these be so scanty to him, as that any thing else can possibly have more, he is not actually preferred before them: but the point will be more clear, by considering it comparatively, when we set any thing by God, and we can perceive, (1.) That God hath more of us than it hath. (2.) When we rather turn from it, and leave it, for his sake, than leave him and his will. This will be clear by instance for example, suppose a man hath done thee some notable good turns, his person is very amiable, his society very sweet; compare the temper of thine heart towards God, and such an one, whether such an one finds more sensible respect? More ready compliance? Most care to please? Strongest desires of friendship and familiarity? Most jealousies of giving distaste, and causing some breach? Most cutting of heart in case of displeasure manifested? Most gladness when favour and respect is renewed? And any thing is done that produces a manifesting of good liking? Compare thus, I say, the temper of thy spirit, and it will manifestly appear, whether God be preferred before such an one or no? for, in these particulars, and such like, consists this preferring of one thing before another. Do the like with any other thing whatsoever, as husband, wife, child, goods, pleasures, liberty, health, life, or what else is dear; if God outstrip them, and more be spent on him than them, then he is preferred before them. For preferring is no more but the setting of one foremost, or before another; so that the other comes behind.

The other branch of preferring God is in the case of competition, when God and his will stand in such opposition against any thing, that either his will, or it must be rejected. Now, in this case, preferring God before such a thing, is a renouncing, or foregoing such a thing rather than him. Even as in a tempest at sea, when a man must either cast his goods over board, or inevitably hazard his life; life is preferred before goods, when for life's sake he chooseth to cast his goods away. So when God will not admit such or such a thing to stand with him, but his will, or that must sink, he is then preferred when we are contented to part with that for the preservation of his will entire. For example; consider Abraham's case, either God must be denied and put by, and Isaac live; or God's will stand, and Isaac die. Now Abraham's choosing to part with Isaac rather than cross God's will, manifestly prefers God before Isaac. On the other side, consider the rich man's case in the gospel; it stood thus, either he must sell all and give it away, and so follow Christ; or keep all, and leave him. Here Christ, and his wealth, stand in competition, one or the other must be parted with: this man went away sorrowful, because he had much riches; that is, he chose rather to lose Christ than his wealth, and so preferred the world before him. Only note, these are extraordinary cases, in force only, when God reveals himself, that he stands in competition with such things. Doth God call for thy wealth more or less, to be given to such and such uses? Wilt thou not part with it, or do it by half, as Ananias did, or do it grudgingly? Wilt thou make shipwreck of God's revealed will to save thy purse? Then thou preferrest it before him. Conclude the like in all cases whatsoever of this nature, when it comes to pass: either God must be flatly denied, this must be done, that must be forborne, the other thing must be parted withal. If you will prefer God, all these things must give way and stoop to him. Hear our Saviour's own doom of the case, "If any man come to me, and do not hate (lie saith more than forsake) his father, mother, wife, children, brethren for my sake, and for the gospel, he is not worthy of me. You see what a preferring of himself he requires.

3. Living godly, is to serve and worship God in his own way, or according to his own will, which our Saviour briefly comprehends in two words, "In spirit and in truth." The former

points to the subject, how we must be disposed in serving him. The latter at the matter of his service: (1.) To serve and worship the Lord in spirit, imports, that the whole spirit of a man be rightly disposed in his service: to wit, that we serve him with understanding, knowing whom we worship, what we do, and how we do it; by this our Saviour distinguisheth between the false worship of the Samaritans, and the true of the faithful Jews; "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship," John iv. 22. A blind devotion cannot be a godly service. So Paul tells us, That he *will pray with understanding*. (2.) That we worship with *attention of spirit*, with our spirits fixed upon it, seriously minding the present business, without rovings, gaddings, or wanderings of heart about impertinent matters; as David, "My heart is fixed, O God, I will sing and give praise;" the apostle calls this a "giving of earnest heed, lest we let slip the thing." (3.) That we serve him wisely, projecting fittest times and best means for the better dilating our spirits, and more exact and complete perfecting of the service, and the removal of impediments. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom," Prov. iv. 7. It both facilitates and graces the work. The apostle exhorts, That "the word dwell richly in us, and in all wisdom too." (4.) That we serve and worship him willingly and freely, with an inclination of spirit to his service; St. John tells us, "That his commandments must not be grievous." When David had offered abundantly to God's house, he is thankful in a special manner, that God gave him a free and willing heart thereto. The Lord does not brook sullen, wearisome services, that are tedious even to men; God must be served of choice. (5.) All service must spring from love. "The love of God constrains me," saith the apostle; no service is acceptable but what is set on fire by this coal; the apostle requires that *all things be done in love*, much more God's worship; this makes the main difference between filial and servile service: hence it is he reduceth all service to love, and calls love *the fulfilling the law*, because it is the *primum mobile*, to set the whole frame of service in their several motions. We must pray out of love to prayer, so also hear, receive the Lord's supper, and meditate upon God's word out of love thereto. (6.) God must be served for conscience-sake, not with a reserved liberty whether we will serve him or no; **as**

if it were an arbitrary matter, as walking abroad to take the air, which we may or may not do at pleasure. Men must not think God beholden to them for vouchsafing him their attendance; a necessary tie of conscience lies on them. This service for conscience-sake the apostle requires to men in authority, much more is it due to God himself. (7.) God is to be served with unanimousness; that is, a concurrence of all the powers and faculties of the soul together, each must be doing, as in a well ordered family, every servant is stirring to dispatch business, As many hands make quick work, so every faculty must put a helping hand to dispatch God's service; there must none be idle. As David speaks of himself, when he set upon praising God, "My soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name." Thus must the Lord be worshipped, or served, in spirit, of those that will live godly. Again, to serve God according to his will, we must serve him in truth, and this two ways. 1. In sincerity, with a real upright heart, as it is opposed to hypocrisy. 2. When we serve him according to the pattern which he hath given, both for the matter, manner, and time, &c. the matter of God's worship consists of such divine exercises as he commands. Some are public, some private, and some secret; the public are such as are required in the congregations, or public assemblies; the private in families; the secret by one's self alone; in all which true godliness hath regard to all that God enjoins, and only that; so that will-worship is no true godliness, but a false worship; "In vain do they worship me," saith the Lord, "teaching for doctrines the traditions of men;" this is not holiness to the Lord, though it may be never so zealously performed, and with never so good a meaning; for it is only God's warrant and commission that can make worship authentic: as for human rites of time and place, what tends to decency, they are not any parts of the worship itself, but only conveniencies; if men should make them essential, then would they defile worship.

The public exercises of God's worship are, 1. Reading the scriptures; so Paul testifies in a sermon of his at Antioch, where he tells us, "That the prophets were read every sabbath day," Acts xiii. 27. The like you may see in our Saviour's practice, "When he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up, as the custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and

stood up to read." Luke iv. 16. This must be done audibly and distinctly. 2. Preaching the word, which is an opening and applying the word: that this is an exercise of public worship is plain by the fore-mentioned practice of Christ, who, after he had read, preached on that text of Isa. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me;" from which many gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, as the Holy Ghost affirms; the like you may see in Ezra the priest, who stood in a pulpit of wood above the people assembled, and read in a book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand. 3. Attention to the word read and preached, for which see the two former examples. "The ears of all the people were attentive to the law; and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him," (that is Christ.) This attention implies not only a giving ear, but also a pondering of the sayings, as the virgin Mary; and a hearing with good affection, as did Peter's converts, *who heard him gladly*, Act, ii. 41, and with application, as the same hearers and the gaoler. 4. Baptizing must go with teaching, as Christ commanded, and John the Baptist practised. 5. The administration and receiving the Lord's supper. "The disciples met together to break bread." 6. Prayer; in respect of the publicness of it, the house of God is called, "A house of prayer;" and Paul, after he had preached at Troas, &c. "kneeled down, and prayed with them all;" in which exercise it is not sufficient to be present, but to join with them in spirit. 7. Praising God, with singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, with melody in the heart, and that frequently, as David did; or otherwise publishing the Lord's praises, by declaring his marvellous works, and exalting him in the great congregation: "Come, (saith David) I will tell you what great things the Lord hath done for us:" for this cause did he pen so many psalms of praise, that God might be publicly praised. 8. Add to this fasting.

The matter of divine private worship in families apart, or christians among themselves, 1. Is searching the scripture, which is commended of the men of Berea, after they had heard the apostle preach, who receiving the word with all readiness of mind, searched the scriptures daily; this implies three things, (1.) Reading the word. (2.) So as to find out the true meaning of it. (3.) A comparing of scripture with scripture. 2. Another

branch is, private conference about divine things ; such was the practice of the two disciples that went to Emmaus, when Christ joined himself with them ; “ did not our hearts burn within us, (say they,) when he talked with us by the way, and while he opened the scriptures.” 3. Wholesome holy advice, exhorting one another ; rebuking, encouraging, and comforting ; to this purpose serve those passages of the apostle, “ Exhort one another daily,” Heb. iii. 13. “ Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,” Eph. v. 11. “ Comfort one another with these sayings,” 1 Thes. iv. 18. 4. Private prayer with the family ; herein was Cornelius his godliness, for which the Holy Ghost commends him ; “ He was a devout man, and feared God with all his house ; and prayed to God alway ;” which, although it have no special stint for the time, yet the apostle’s general rule, *Pray continually*, and Cornelius’s practice, *always*, is rule enough.

The matter of sacred godliness consists, 1. In a daily constant meditation in God’s word ; thus David describes the blessed man, “ He meditates in the law of the Lord day and night ; which exercise is sweet to a godly man ;” as David speaks of himself. 2. In self-examination, or an inward diligent trial of a man’s own ways, by calling himself to an account, and ransacking his heart and life ; so the apostle enjoins, “ Examine yourselves, prove yourselves,” and the prophet Jeremy in his Lamentations, “ Let us search and try our ways,” Lament. iii. 40. 3. In secret prayer by one’s self alone, which our Saviour enjoins ; “ Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret. This is either by ejaculation, which is a lifting up of the soul to God in some short earnest request, and hath no stinted time or place : or a prepared setting of a man’s self to seek the Lord more at large ; such was Daniel’s prayer three times a day.

As for the time of living godly, the apostle expresseth it in the close of this text, namely, “ In this present world ;” so that there is no minute of time wherein we are exempted from any of these lessons which grace teacheth, when any occasion of practising them is afforded. What Job speaks of his change, must be every christian’s practice about godliness, and the other lessons ; “ All the days of their appointed time” must they wait

and be in readiness to exercise godliness, righteousness, and sobriety, with the denial of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*. In brief, this time imports a perseverance in well-doing unto the end. To begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, makes the latter end worse than the beginning. If any faint and give over the race, they lose the prize ; therefore the apostle admonisheth thus, “ So run that ye may obtain :” we must be flourishing trees in the courts of God’s house, as well in old age, as in our prime. Besides, this present world points also at the impediments, which yet must not hinder in the race set before us : as if he should say, Although you live in this present world, which wholly lies in wickedness, and is at enmity with Christ and you, and lays many snares to trap you, many baits to allure you ; and casts out floods of persecutions, cares, and fears, to swallow you up ; yet in spite of all, you must stand fast, and keep on your course of godliness.

S E R M O N X L I X.

A PREPARATION FOR THE FAST, JULY 8, 1640

AMOS iv. 12.

BECAUSE I WILL DO THIS UNTO THEE, PREPARE TO MEET
THY GOD, O ISRAEL.

WHEN bodies are distempered, that nature, in its ordinary course, cannot make its own way to uphold it, men usually seek to a violent course of physic ; which, although it be very troublesome to nature for a time, yet for the purging out of dangerous rooted maladies, men will not stick at the present disquiet. Now, wise physicians deal with such bodies, as surgeons do with teeth they would draw forth ; they first loosen them before the main pull ; so they give preparatives a day or two before a purge, to

make way for the better working of it, when it is taken. You are not ignorant, that within these few days, the whole nation of England hath a great purge prescribed; even a solemn day of humiliation in an extraordinary manner, by reason of many rooted dangerous distempers, both of sin and misery, wisely and providently observed by our great physician of church and state, the king; which our ordinary way of seeking God stirs not; and, that we may be prepared for it, he hath published a royal decree before hand. In my deepest thoughts of contriving this great work to the best advantage, I find, that seasonable directions for a wise and religious preparation, will much further the happy desired issue of it. I have, therefore, allotted this opportunity to put you upon a seasonable and useful preparation for that fast, from this text; in which you see expressly, that in case of provocation, God doth not only expect that his people come forth and meet him, but also that they prepare themselves for such a meeting.

In furthering you to a preparation, 1. I shall endeavour to shew you what is requisite for a due preparation for a fast. 2. Of what necessity such a preparation is, and then apply it. Two things are mainly requisite unto a preparation for a solemn meeting of God, especially by fasting. 1. Preconsideration. 2. Predisposition.

1. Some things, concerning the fast, are to be considered, or thought on, before hand; without which the business will prove but a rude, confused, and vain labour. Now the things mainly to be thought on before hand, are (1.) The nature of the business we are called to, that we may know what we have to do. (2.) The end of it. (3.) The need of it. (4.) The means how it may be well done.

(1.) A fast is more talked of, I mean a religious one, than well understood, and therefore most sordidly kept of too many, who cannot forecast what to do, because they are ignorant of it. Be, therefore, attentive, briefly to hear, and understand what a fast God requires. There are divers sorts, as, natural, compulsive, civil, and religious; our business is with the last, which is either ordinary or extraordinary; this last is when it consists of many days, as that of Moses, Elias, Christ, and Daniel; ordinary is that of one whole day; this is ours. Now, although in the strict signification of the word *fast*, it imports simply abstinence; yet, in all religious fasts, there is something positive as well as pri-

vative. For the privative part, it must not be only abstinence from meat and drink, which is all that the vulgar regard, but an universal abstinence, as well from all natural and useful things of the world, as from sin. To give you a little light, note, how the scriptures express a fast; "The bridegroom must not go forth from his chamber, nor the bride from her closet," Joel ii. 16. This is a matrimonial abstinence. Men must also put off their ornaments, they must not stand tricking and trimming themselves, but must shew a kind of neglect of their attire. Of old they rent their garments, and put on sackcloth. There must be abstinence from common labour, pleasure, and talk. The latter is little observed by most that fast, but you shall find all this strictly required, Isa. lviii. 3—13. But, besides this, there must be the internal abstinence of the mind; the mind must fast from all worldly contrivances, thoughts, affections. In brief, the whole man, in fasting, must forbear all things, which concern not the furtherance of the positive work in fasting, for the former is but subservient to the latter; that is, to the positive work, either public or private.

The public is, 1. A timely joining with the congregation, both with outward reverence, and inward intention of mind; but most specially there must be each man's several confession of heart in the public confession. So of application of all things, in praying, reading, or preaching, which concerns him in particular; and this joining must be constant throughout all. 2. It must be affectionate working like physic, making the soul sick; for which cause it is called a day for a man to afflict his soul. The private business is, 1. A recollection of the public reasons and concerns. 2. A supplying, in a man's thoughts, what most concerns his particular case, either not sufficiently enforced, or not met withal: as day-labourers, when the task is over, will do a little for themselves. About this matter must the meditations, confessions, supplications, and humiliations of the soul be employed. This business of the fast must we rub and survey, as men do against a training day; they will take down their arms, and view them over.

(2.) We should preconsider the ends of a fast, why God looks for it; he that hath not the mark in his eye before he shoots, shall never hit it.

The ends to be considered of are, 1. The humbling of the soul.

2. The pleasing of God. 3. The averting of wrath. In this we should ponder what wrath is on foot, or breaking out, whence it proceeds, how it may be pacified. 3. We should preconsider what end there is of fasting, both with respect to the public, and other private concerns; as namely, what sins abound, and with how high a hand that God calls for it, and hath oft made it effectual for much good. 4. We should forecast the means of fasting; we should do as workmen, that look out and lay in a readiness *their* several tools before they fall to work; so that each may be in readiness at need; as namely, that prayer may frame the spirit and secret self-examination; but especially, there must be recourse to the promises of the Spirit for assistance.

The second branch of reparation follows; predisposition, and that, 1. Of other affairs. 2. Of a man's own spirit. 3. Of the work itself.

He that will not be curbed in the work of fasting, must take such an order before hand, with other common occasions, that they may not lie in his way to stumble at them, which without predisposing he shall never avoid. Now this is no more but a provision of what is needful, that it may not be left to be then provided; and a dispatching things, that they may not be then to be dispatched; that so the world may not encroach upon this time, but keep within its own bounds; as ordering journeys, bargains, payments, and such like, that they may not be troubled with them that day. You may say, things of necessity, or dangerous, which cannot be avoided, may be then done. I answer, consider whether the careless want of foredisposing cause the danger and necessity, if so, the fault is in defect of preparation; but more especially a man's own spirit must be prepared by a predisposing of it to this work; and that you may so do, I will shew you, 1. What this predisposition is. 2. How needful unto a fast. And, 3. How it may be done.

1. This predisposition is nothing else but such a breaking of spirit before-hand, as to make it frame unto this yoke, and to draw handsomely at the time. Our spirits are like wild heifers to any service, especially to such a self-tormenting exercise, as a fast; they will be rising and kicking even at the fore-thought of it, and grumble at the tediousness of it; and certainly we shall find them very sullen and lifeless at it, if we rouse them not to it ~~before hand~~. (1.) Because it is an unbeaten unusual road, a

work seldom handled ; therefore men will be to seek : as suppose a man be to do business he is not used to do, as mowing, it will be harsher to him than daily work ; for use makes perfect. (2.) Because it is a longer lesson a great deal than usually is set us ; this being as long as the whole day, others being but an hour long. (3.) Because a more thorny, prickly work, and requires much more labour of the soul. 4. Because it cuts deeper, and launcheth wider, and ransacketh more narrowly than other service : now this disposing of our spirits is no more but such a skilful winning of them, as to make them pliable and apt to the work ; and this is necessary to be set about before-hand.

(1.) Because a little time and labour will not break them ; as it is not an hour's work that will break a colt for the saddle, that he may be pliable when he is to be rid ; and our spirits being naturally more wild than colts, he, therefore, that would not be thrown, or disappointed of his journey in the fast, must take his spirit to task before-hand. The more dull a boy is, the more time he must take to con, especially a hard and long lesson, if he mean to say it perfect.

(2.) The fast-day is a day of arraignment, our day of trial. If we expect to come off without loss, had we not need to get our wits about us before-hand ? To bespeak our judge ? To get all our plea in readiness ? Without preparation, some thing or other may be forgot, or neglected, which being then to seek, may mar ail ; as the foolish virgins were cast for lack of preparing oil before-hand. It is a good rule, *præmonitus, et præmunitus* ; fore-warned, fore-armed. Now if our minds be a wool-gathering, and we be as bad husbands, that leave their cause at sixes and sevens, till the very trial, whilst the adversary is fortifying his accusations against us ; shall we not then be left speechless, and be foiled ? If men be but to travel a journey, will they not provide over night ? If to wash or brew, will they not get things in a readiness before-hand ? How much more in so weighty a matter ? When horses are to run a hard race, will not men pull up their bellies, and diet them before, that they may not fail in the race ? If men be to make speeches, will they not whet their wits and study before-hand ? In brief, are men unfit for anything of moment, till they consult and pause afore-hand ? And can such a work, as a fast, be done without predisposition ?

But now shall a man get his spirit fitly disposed ? 1. Let him

take a survey of the present indisposedness of it, whether it be ignorance, faintness, or averseness; let him give an assay at his corruptions, by which he may feel what rooting they have. 2. Let him resolutely tie himself to the work. 3. Let him enter the plough of examination, and humiliation. 4. Let him earnestly seek Christ to bring his spirit to it; to mortify his corruptions, and to quicken his spirit.

S E R M O N L.*

OF SELF-DENIAL.

MATTH. xvi. 24.

IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF.

OUR blessed Saviour having sounded his disciples what they thought of him, who he was; wherein Peter, according to his wonted forwardness, answers for himself, and the rest, ver. 16, "That he was Christ, the Son of the living God:" upon this confession of their faith he takes the present advantage to break to them that doleful tragedy which should ensue; to wit, of his sufferings, ver. 21. Here Peter, as before, steps in, and shews as much weakness now, as he did faith before, advising Christ to spare and pity himself, ver. 22. Which cowardly counsel when Christ had sharply rebuked him, ver. 23, he takes occasion from this selfishness bewrayed, to lay down an infallible conclusion, which all his followers must embrace, namely, if they will come after him, they must deny themselves. Wherein I might note, the seasonableness of our Saviour's counsel; he plucks at the weed so soon as it peeps above ground, before it hath time to

* This Sermon was preached at Martin Abbey, and afterwards at Oxford, Anno 1639.

root itself; he observes the physician's rule, *principiis obsta*, delays are dangerous where poison hath fastened; but I will not insist on this. I might also observe, that men often bewray their own infirmities by the counsel they give others; that self-denial is then seasonably urged, when faith is first planted, and hath taken root; else instead of a lure it will prove a scarecrow. It is true, if no self-denial, no part in Christ; but it is as true, that we must first be believers, before we can be able to deny ourselves; Christ's method can have no danger in it, but may serve for a sure pattern. But I hasten to the main thing.

The point is this, they that choose Christ must deny themselves. Christianity is no lazy life. There must be bustling in it, as well as in the world; which to the blinded, that understands not the gospel, is a stone of offence; insomuch, that from that time that they hear thereof, (though before, perhaps, they look after Christ,) they go backward, and will walk no more with him; as appeared in the young rich man in the gospel. Now, because this is a necessary sequel of choosing Christ, not to be separated, and yet so offensive to many, let us consider, 1. What it is to deny a man's self. 2. Why we must do it. 3. How we may attain to it. For the first, two things are to be enquired into, (1.) What a man's self is. (2.) What this denial is.

A man's self in scripture is considered three ways, natural, corrupt, and spiritual. This distinction is very needful for understanding the point in hand, and will give light to resolve many doubts, which we may meet withal in due place. Let us therefore, 1. see how this distinction is bottomed. 2. What these several selfs are. 3. Which is meant in the text. The two former go together. 1. Natural self is nothing else but personal subsistence, consisting of a reasonable soul and human body united; in which self we conclude, all the natural faculties of the soul, and members of the body: in a word, in this sense each man is himself, as he is distinct from any other man, which betokens his individuity; thus Peter takes it, saying, "I myself am a man," Acts x. 26. And Paul speaking to the gaoler, "Do thyself no harm," Acts xvi. 28. Sometimes this natural self is taken more largely than for the subject only; it imports often all things that conduce to the being, and well-being of nature; as food, raiment, life, liberty, and the like, because they are all appurtenances to nature, to preserve it. So you may understand that text

“Do no harm to thyself,” that is, to thy life, for he **was about** to kill himself.

2. A man’s corrupt self, is nothing else but so much in his nature, as is contrary to the rectitude of God’s revealed will. To wit, ignorance, errors, vanity, misconceit, false reasonings in the mind, stubbornness, humorsomeness, frowardness, crosses, wilfulness, deadness, deceitfulness, and such like; with all sorts of inconsistent, impertinent, vain, loose, ungodly, unrighteous thoughts; all misplaced, misguided, excessive, inordinate affections, or any other way; all sleepiness, brawniness, unskilfulness, and base cowardliness of conscience; all unruliness, and predominancy of the fancy to divert; all masterfulness, looseness, offensiveness, and brutishness of the senses and members; all false ends, self-dependence, and self-sufficiency.

This, I say, and such like, is man’s corrupt self; and this corruptness in man is often called himself. The Lord speaking of one that hateth instruction, consenting with thieves, and partaking with adulterers; at last tells him, that “God kept silence, and he thought him to be such an one as himself.” “In me, that is in my **flesh**, (saith St. Paul,) dwells no good thing,” Rom. vii. 18. The text opposeth man to himself.

3. A man’s renewed self is no more but so much of man, whether in his spirit, soul, or body, as is moulded, and hath the stamp or impression of Christ upon it, and is reduced to a submission or resignation of its self to his will. The scripture plainly speak of such a self; as our Saviour speaking of the prodigal that broke out, and then growing weary of that condition, thinks of returning home to his father again; this inward consultation Christ calls a coming to himself. The apostle speaks as fully to the same purpose; “If I do that which I would not, it is no more I, but sin. I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” There is nothing more frequent than the mention of these two latter selves, the one the old, the other the new man; one flesh, the other Spirit.

In this diversity of selfs, you will ask, what self Christ means? I answer, Not every self absolutely; the last must not be denied, but maintained, yet not so as to be made our justifying righteousness; for it is Christ’s own work in a man. This must not be denied, but confessed: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, (i. e. Christ’s) and, with the mouth, confes-

sion is made unto salvation.” For the former, to wit, the natural; neither is that simply to be denied as the corrupt self, only so far forth as it stands at any time in opposition to some special trial of God, which extends not to an universality; for the apostle said to the goaler, “Do thyself no harm,” for he would have been *felo de se*. The mind of God, in general, is for our preservation of this being, and the furthering of the perfection of it, yet so as he reserves a liberty to himself to sequester when he sees cause, even natural good; nay, the best of it, even life itself, from his people: so that this must be denied only when such occasions happen, as would set God and his people at variance, that one must be left. As for a man’s corrupt self, it must be denied at all times, universally, in all the parts of it, with all a man’s might.

Consider we now what this denial is, that God requires?

1. This self-denial supposeth self-solicitation, which is a kind of begging, or earnest importunate wooing; wherewith the natural, or corrupt self, intreats either the embracing or sparing of somewhat, which is suitable to it, without which it suffers damage. There is no self-denial, strictly, where there doth not precede a temptation; mere abstinence from things, whereto there is not an actual inclination, or some secret desire of reservation, is no self-denial. Men do not deny a thing which is not first moved to them, or urged upon them; as Christ did not deny the sparing or favouring himself, till Peter first moved him to it.

2. In denial, the thing sued for, or begged, though it seems never so plausible and good, yet it appears to him, that is solicited unto it, to have a greater weight of evil than good, which bears the sway; so that the self-denier must be a clear-sighted man, able to discern things in their proper colours; yea, and a man of faith to believe that they are worse than they appear to sense, because God hath pronounced so of them; for men cannot possibly deny things that appear only good, or better embraced than rejected; for *Bonum est objectum appetitus*; yea, and he must see (all things considered) that there is an over-topping good in want of such things as he denies; that this is far better than the other. As for example: consider life itself, when God calls for it; he that will deny his life, must see (how glorious a shew soever life carries, and how many great and good things it propounds, yet then) the sparing of it is both

the loss of it, and that which is far better, God himself, and an eternity of bliss; and that the denial of his life is of necessity in order to find and save it, yea, and to find bliss. The sight of faith must be the spring of self-denial; and these previous requisites preceding it stand, 1. In a man's inexorableness to such solicitations, though they be urged with such subtlety of natural arguments, as he cannot well repel; yet, he holds the conclusion, not to be swayed by them, or moved to entertain them, but still turns the deaf ear unto them; so far as self-solicitation staggers a man, so far self-denial is shaken. See this branch of self-denial excellently shining in Paul, who, to spare himself, and not go up to Jerusalem, was solicited thereto by the danger and misery that would ensue; "But, (saith he), None of these things move me," Acts xx. 24. So David, much provoked to wrath by the loud cries of injuries, sustained from his enemies, mark how he expresseth the denial of himself, "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; I was as a dumb man, that opened not his mouth," Psal. xxxviii. 13. You will say, Doth not a man deny himself, although fleshly, or self-solicitations, move him, who can choose but be moved with them? I answer, That by moving, I mean not that the self-denier must not be affected in any kind therewith, for it is impossible; all occurrences have some impression on the affections, much more these; but, by moving, I mean drawn, or inclined to yield to such solicitations. But it may be said, peradventure, a man may be startled by the nearness of such solicitations, especially such as concern his being, or well-being. I answer, That, in self-denial, it is with self-deniers, as with the needle in the mariner's compass, it being touched with the loadstone; much jogging may make it stir this way, and that way, a while; but, at last, it will settle towards the north-pole, and it cannot be moved to settle elsewhere; so, though self-solicitations may make a believer stir a while, yet nothing can make him settle from his north-star.

2. Besides the deafness in self-denial, there is also contradiction, which stands in two things, (1.) A direct and flat gain saying, without any secret reservations or cautions, ifs or ands. A man that denies himself, doth not only slacken his pace, but stops himself; he doth not only cut short the allowance, but takes it quite away, every jot of the motion is rejected. So, then, when a man wholly disclaims his own righteousness, and gain

says every motive the flesh useth, that neither the one nor the other can change him ; but he sings the same song still ; I will not consent ; this or that shall find no favour. The execution intended shall stand firm as the law of the Medes and Persians, irrevocable, although his ears be filled with never so many outcries ; such contradiction being direct and flat, is a real denial. (2.) It is a peremptory one ; that is, it is the more stiff, by how much the more it is plied to a flexibleness, as in Christ's denial of Satan ; awhile he lets him argue, and Christ answers him ; at last, finding him over importunate, he deals peremptorily with him ; " Get thee hence, Satan," Mat. iv. 10. So Paul, being solicited not to go up to Jerusalem, denies them peremptorily, " What do you thus breaking my heart ? I am ready not only to suffer, but to die ; then (said they) we ceased," Acts xxi. 12, 13, 14. In this kind of denial there is still a vehemency or ardency.

(3.) In self-denial there is struggling, and resistance : in which struggling note, First, That such self-solicitations exasperate or provoke anger against the flesh, that will take no reasonable answer. Nay, as when beggars will not be gone, at last they will make the people of the house angry, being over solicited. What, saith the denying soul, can there be no quiet ? then begins choler to rise, and the blood to boil, which produceth threatenings ; but that is not all, it sets to buckle and harness itself for resistance, and calls out for Christ, its good neighbour, to come and aid ; and so lets fly amain at himself, to beat down his body, as Paul did : even as when thieves beset a house, the master of the house gets his ammunition ready, calls neighbours, and dischargeth upon them ; and thus denies them with powder : if the first denial will not serve, to wit, inexorableness, then must flat and peremptory contradiction, with vehemency, break forth ; if self-solicitations regard not that neither, nor will be gone, then must it stand a combat, and be cast out. Let this suffice for the nature of self-denial.

Consider next, why such as come after Christ must deny themselves ; it seems hard measure to many, but to the wise in heart it will appear very reasonable and necessary.

1. It must be so, because we are not our own, but are bought with a price. Is it reasonable that hired servants, much more ransomed slaves, should neglect their master's business, to serve

their own turn, and work for themselves? This reason Christ intimates in the text: by the phrase of coming after him, he tacitly gives to understand, that such are his servants; whoso takes notice of this his relation, cannot but take notice of Christ's demand, and of the equity thereof.

2. Because we are in a crazy distempered condition, and therefore not fit to be our own carvers. Shall it be well in an ignorant man, out of self-will, or self-conceit, to go his own way, say his guide what he can; that knows what thieves and quagmires lie in that way? Shall an illiterate rustic stand stiff against a judge in a law-case? May a sick man choose his own diet, that pleaseth the palate, whatever the physician saith? Is it like to go well with such persons? Nay, is it not madness, and the desperate way to ruin? A foolish man, indeed, is apt to think the brat of his own begetting is fairest, though it be a deformed monster; as the agueish man cannot be persuaded that abstinence is better for him than cold drink; though, indeed, instead of easing, it enrages the disease, as sound men know, and his own experience, when it is too late, will tell him. This is certain, whatever Christ requires us to deny, or reject, is our poison, though it look never so lovely, or taste never so sweet. You will say, Is not wealth useful, liberty sweet, life dear? Are not parents to be loved, and obeyed? How then can a yielding to enjoy them be poison? I answer, That which at sometimes is in itself good and wholesome, in its own nature may be, at another time, a man's bane, if he then use it; as in the case of an ague before-mentioned; so may these things, though sometimes useful, yet at other times they may be poison; as "he that will save his life shall lose it; he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall find it," saith Christ. But how shall I know when things are useful, and to be embraced; and when baneful, and to be denied? I answer, by the advice and opinion of Christ, the skilful physician; in those cases wherein he says they are baneful, we may conclude them so: now in general he concludes them so, when they stand in competition with him and his will; so that the not denial of them, is the denial of him and his will; when men choose rather to keep them, and reject him and his will, than to adhere to him by forsaking them. They being therefore thus prejudicial, and ourselves not competent judges thereof, it is but reasonable to

deny ourselves in all such things as Christ requires to be denied.

3. This denial is reasonable, because the contrary is an unsufferable affront to the Divine Majesty; yea, shamefully injurious to divine goodness. Not denying of ourselves, is a casting away of God's cords from us; every refusal or denial, where God calls for it, infers what Pharaoh spake; *Who is the Lord, that I should let this or that go?* and what the wicked in Psal. xii. 4, "Our tongue is our own, who is Lord over us?" Which is a kind of dethroning or disrobing of God, as much as in a man lies: is it seemly, nay tolerable, for a servant, when his master bids him forbear to do this or that, to say, (because his fingers itch after it,) I will not? There is nothing levels more directly against Divine Majesty, than persistence in a man's own way against divine authority; so that not to deny ourselves is, *Crimen læsæ Majestatis*, and therefore capital: besides it injures divine goodness, not only as it is a churlish requital of former kindness, but also as it misconstrues present intended favour in the command. Now what can be more injurious, than to deem a man an enemy in that wherein he only aims at good, and by which it must be compassed? What can be more distasteful than to deem that poison, and therefore to be rejected, which out of a skilful tenderness is delivered for the best cordial in the world, without which it were impossible to escape miscarriage? How can such perverse misprision be tolerated? Christ may well take up Paul's complaint, "Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth."

Use. Is this an inseparable attendant of coming after Christ, to deny a man's self? then are all such grossly mistaken, and aim far beside the mark, who think they may humour themselves, and yet have a part in Christ. As the standard is the trial of gold, so is this revealed mind of Christ, the discriminator of those that have interest in him from counterfeits: thy faith, therefore, that humoureth thyself, is a mere dream and delusion; that which thou fanciest to be faith, is but vain and dead. As cockering parents, by humouring their children, and giving them the reins, never crossing them, prove in the end their ruin; so giving the reins to thyself, not checking and controlling thine own itching humours, not bridling thine inordinate judgment and affections, dost suck in thine own poison

and bare . all thy stay 's, that Christ will shew thee mercy ; but hear what he saith himself, “ He that (instead of denying himself) shall deny me before men, him will I deny, before my Father which is in heaven.” You will say, Doth not Christ take men in their blood ? and doth not faith alone, without works save ? I answer, That as this is a corner stone to those that rightly understand it ; so is it a stone of offence to all those that abuse it. Know, therefore, that although Christ finds men in their blood when he enters into covenant with them ; yet he leaves them not in their blood when they become his, but covers their nakedness, washeth them from their blood, and puts jewels upon them, (Ezek. xvi.) and that not by imputation only, but by infusion also of actual grace. When God converts Ephraim, he was *a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, but afterwards he became *God's dear child*. Paul going with fury to persecute, is met with Christ ; but, when Christ had yoked him for his own turn, he puts into a better tune ; he makes him deny his former attempts, and stoop to him, saying, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” As for justification, by faith alone, without works, in some sense, (namely, the apostle's) it is true ; but, **in** some sense, (to wit, many a man's own) it is false. It is faith alone justifies ; works have no hand in that business. Yet, that faith that justifies alone, stands not alone without works, as if there could be a faith in men, and no renovation of life. Now, such as wrest the scriptures to their own perdition, dream of a faith that hath no fruits at all ; St. James calls them *vain and dead*, certainly true faith will make a man deny himself for Christ ; dost thou then establish thine own righteousness, and not deny it, saying as in Isaiah, *It is all as menstruous cloth* ? Dost thou maintain thine own judgment of things, and conclude according to it, and not according to Christ's ? Dost thou not deny thine own lusts, but make provision for them to fulfil them ? Dost thou not deny thine own passions and affections, but thinkest thou dost well to give them the reins to that inordinateness they have got ? Art thou not contented to part with any thing, when Christ calls for it ? If not, but persistest a self-maintainer, then hear thy doom ; *Christ shall profit thee nothing ; every one of his must pluck out his right eye, and cut off his right hand*, Mat. v. 29, 30. That is, deny or reject what is dearest to him, standing in competition with Christ, if he will not go to hell.

But because some say, They deny themselves, but do not; others, that they do not, and yet do; that neither the tender, jealous soul may be snared, nor yet the self-deceiving soul be deluded, I will endeavour to make the case plain to both, or at least so many as will regard it. Something, for this purpose, may be gathered from what I have spoken for the unfolding of self-denial.

1. Besides note, That the thing denied, is, as it were a man's self, and yet is not favoured, the trial of denial is in that which is dear and pleasant; as Abraham's, in his denying himself in his only son; such a denial as, were it not for God, a man would not be wooed or hired to part with it: now bring this home, and make trial by this rule; suppose thy master-delight, thy minion that hath ravished thine heart; suppose all thy wealth and substance, thy parents, wife, and children, lie whining and making moan, when Christ warns them away; they beg and make piteous crying, do they not only melt, but overcome thee to spare them? If thou wilt not, and dost not contentedly part with them, then dost thou not deny thyself: doubtless an eye, or a hand, would make shrewd moan to be spared, if designed to a violent disjunction; yet a denying, or stopped ear, must be given to such outcries: the denying soul doth as the Israelites, that made their sons pass through the fire; they got divine music to fill their ears, and deafen them to such outcries: many, out of common courtesy, may deny some superfluity, that may be well spared for Christ, (and yet but few of them neither) but his own self knows no stint: If Christ say, *Sell all*, men must part with it; it is matter of life, and therefore being less than life, it must go; as the richest lading in a ship, though a man's whole stock be freighted in it, overboard it shall go, when sparing of it is the ruin of life: some may say, I know not what to do in such choice cases, not having been put to it. I answer, thou mayest know by this. How is it with the cases that are already on foot? How dealest thou with the present lust arising, and wooing for harbour? Canst thou not for pity deny them? When a naked, hungry, undone member of Christ calls for a more than ordinary portion of relief, how canst thou part with it? If God call for wife, husband, child, or a dear friend, sends losses, and crosses, how bearest thou them? If in these smaller things thou stick with Christ,

surely, when the price is raised, thou wilt not leave him. But some will say, (being fearful every bush is a thief,) sure, if this be true, I do not deny myself, and why? because they find themselves very loath still to part with any thing against the hair; therefore fain they would have this and that spared. I answer, if this be all, it makes not void self-denial, nay, it necessarily presupposes this, as you have heard; there is no denial where there is not first solicitation; and the dearer a thing, the loather a man is to part with it; if at last he can say, for all that, it is for Christ, and he shall have it; the denial is so much the stronger, and the love to Christ appears to be the greater. Consider therefore, at parting, after all parlies betwixt flesh and spirit, about things that Christ calls for; is it, I say, at last left to Christ's pleasure, or hath the flesh reprieved it, overcoming by its importunity? If the last sentence be for Christ, this is self-denial; if the flesh over-rule, then it is wanting.

Use. If this denial must be, then buckle thyself to it, and let it be universal, as the apostle's rule is, "*To deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; be not partial; favour neither small nor great; say not of this, oh, this is but a small one; or of that, it doth no body any hurt: but be alike resolute, cast out small and great, quench the sparkles as well as the great coals, the covered fire as well as the flame; for a spared sparkle may set the whole course of nature on fire, as well as the greatest coal and consume all to ashes.* Say not, it will go out of itself; for the least sin allowed, or the allowance of any thing that is against the will of Christ, is as a sparkle lighting upon tinder; such is a man's nature therefore, not likely to out, but to grow. The very Gibeonites only being left, and all the rest of the Canaanites destroyed, prove pricks in the sides, and thorns in the eyes. One knot of couch-grass being left in the ground, will soon overgrow, and choke the choice herbs.

2. Let this denial be constant, do not begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; be not weary of this well doing; so run in this way, that you may obtain. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," saith Paul. You see he fights not a while only, but even till he finished his course. And let it be done in sincerity, with good will, as unto the Lord; lay aside all base

sinister respects, which will poison the best self-denial; it is as a dead fly in a box of precious ointment. You will say, may I not aim at mine own good in denying myself? I answer, That a man may, in subordination to God and his will. Now, a man's own end is subordinate to God, when the will of God is the *primum mobile*, that sets a man at work to deny himself. 2. When it is *finis ultimus*, that is, God's glory. In brief, a man may take notice of his own good that shall ensue his self-denial, and thereby be further moved thereto, and rejoice therein; but, because it is special service that Christ requires, he must not expect his own good as the wages thereof, nor desist when Christ only shall get the glory thereby; because, as I said, we are not our own, but must work for our master, not for ourselves.

Many are the encouragements to this self-denial, whereto you may reduce the reasons forementioned; besides observe, that although at first it seem a yoke, yet Christ hath promised to make it easy; which encouragement he adds to that command, "take my yoke upon you, for it is easy;" difficulty is the usual discouragement of men in this case; there is a lion in the way, this makes men recoil; but Christ you see takes it out of the way, he will make self-denial as easy as what is most natural. You will say, I cannot find it so. I answer, 1. Peradventure it is for lack of use; after a little treading the path will be smooth. 2. It may be you take not Christ actually along with you in your denial, but go about it in your own strength; and no marvel if it be harsh. If you took him with you, you would be able to do all things, and that with ease, through his strengthening you, whereas of yourself you can do nothing.

Another motive is, this self-denial issues in peace and quietness. Peace with God, whose work is done there; and consequently peace of conscience, which will not only be silent from accusations and condemnations, but also will speak peace and comfort; for God, saith conscience, will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It will afford quietness from inward disturbance; as when an enemy is in a man's house, there's nothing but brawling, quarrelling, and confusion; but being cast out of the house, it is in quiet; so while self swaggers within, the heart cannot but be grieved and troubled with this master of misrule, that turns all upside down, and brings all

out of order, and sets all on fire; but when it is cast out, then the occasion is taken away, and the soul returns to its rest, it falls to its wonted solaces, and freely and uninterruptedly enjoys its communion with God.

Another motive is, this self-denial invites Christ and his spirit not to withdraw; where Christ abides, he will have the government upon his shoulders, he will not be over-topped. He that will not deny any usurping thing which would sit above Christ, must never look to have him remain, and be as an underling. If the people will set up Absalom, David will hie from them*; David indeed for his own safety, but Christ and his Spirit for their prejudice that shall set up any thing in his place. Now, when all such things as controul Christ are packed out of doors, then he manifests himself; many a time hath Christ hid himself, when corruptions have been harboured, as when the church was in her sluggishness, not being willing to shake it off: so long as corrupt self is denied, Christ sees a faithfulness to himself, and delights to attend there.

But how shall I attain this self-denial? I answer, get a true estimate of that self of thine, that is to be denied; nothing but self-love makes self-denial difficult, and self-love proceeds from self-admiration, and an apprehension of self-usefulness; so that if a man could grow out of love with that self, it were easy to deny it; but, here lies the difficulty, to grow out of love with it. The way hereto is to sift this self impartially, and to sound it, and hereby a man shall find this self to be but a serpent in his bosom, in human shape. If a man marry a woman of great beauty, it may be it is death to him to part with her; but if he find her to be a devil in a woman's shape, then will he kick her out of doors with indignation. Men, I confess, are hardly persuaded that themselves are become monsters in nature, vultures to themselves, sucking out their own heart's blood; but so they are, and so must men be persuaded of themselves, before they will deny themselves: that they are so is plain, "To live after the flesh, (saith Paul,) is death; the members thereof are weapons of sin unto death." If men would receive this, then self-denial would come on easily, for it could not but work enmity and hatred; for it is an easy thing for an Amnon to deny the greatest importunity of a Tamar, though he loved her never

* 2 Sam. xv. 14.

so dearly before, when once he hates her. But, I confess, it must be God, and not man, that must discover effectually this deadliness, or mischievousness of a man's self, and he must put enmity between the seed of the serpent in man, and the seed of the woman; therefore God must be sought to in it; and because the thing is a promise founded on Christ, we must put him upon the suit.

S E R M O N L I.

THE USE OF THE LAW.

GALATIANS iii. 19.

WHEREFORE THEN SERVETH THE LAW? IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSION, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME, TO WHOM THE PROMISE WAS MADE.

HAVING, as near as I could, followed the apostle in extolling Christ, and reducing persons to him alone, for comfort and strength, I suppose some conceive I aim at abolishing the law; a jealousy which the apostle himself had in this text; I have therefore, on purpose, pitched hereon, to shew the use of the law to believers, which the apostle compriseth in these words. Now that you may the better observe his drift and meaning, consider that his watchful eye found the Galatians straggled by the seduction of the false apostles from the gospel of Christ, to the works of the law; hereupon he takes them to task, to reduce them back again to faith in Christ alone for justification: his main argument to prove justification by faith in the promises of Christ, is taken from the priority of them to the law; they being made before it, the strength of the argument lies in this; that God, to whom nothing can intervene, after he hath done an act, to make him recall it again, doth not make void the promise by

the succeeding promulgation of the law : hence follow the objection and answer in my text ; where the apostle shews an excellent use of the promulgation of the law, although it be not contrary to the promise.

The text consists of an objection, and an answer ; the objection hath picked out of the premises a nullity of the law ; the answer clears the premises from such gross absurdity. The objection imports thus much, “ If life must still come by promise, in vain did God publish the law ;” the answer suggests, that though life be not the end of the law, yet there are other sufficient uses of it, requiring its promulgation ; which uses the apostle mentions in that answer, shewing, that the law was published to be an appendix to the gospel, giving the reason why it was added to it ; namely, “ Because of transgression ;” then he adds the continuance of this use of the law ; namely, “ Until the seed should come, unto whom the promise was made.”

The apostle’s own conclusion, in his own terms, shall be all the doctrine we will observe from the words, which is this ; “ The law was added because of transgression, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Because of the obscurity herein, let us examine, (1.) What the apostle means by this, “ The law was added.” (2.) What he intends in these words, “ It was added because of transgression.” (3.) What, by the duration of this use of the law, “ Till the seed should come.” (4.) We shall then see how far forth the law stands in force to believers.

1. The addition of the law to the promises of life by Christ, imports, (1.) A priority of the gospel to the law, both in its being, and its proper office ; that is, that God at first established Christ by promise to be our life, and righteousness, before the law was on foot ; for the addition of one thing to another supposeth the thing to which the other was added, was in being before the additament ; this the apostle expressly affirms, when he saith, “ That the promise was four hundred and thirty years before the law ;” and from priority he infers, “ That the law, when it was delivered, was not promulgated in opposition to the promise,” as if the law were to contest with the promise ; for, when God hath once said a thing, he never after contradicts himself ; neither doth one act of his annihilate another ; for he is not a man, that he should lie : now if the law did contradict

the gospel, they being both the voice of God, the matter would infer a lie, or falsehood in the former. If any say, that by this argument the ceremonial law must not be abolished, because it is God's act; I answer, that God ordained that to abide but till Christ came, the promise was established for ever; besides Christ contradicts not the ceremonial law, but is the complement of it.

(2.) This addition imports a principality in the promise of life by Christ, above the law; that is, the law was published for the gospel's sake, to be subservient, or as an handmaid to it, not the gospel to the law; as additions to a house are for more conveniency and benefit of a house, the house is not made for the conveniency of the addition; the gospel is the end of the law's publication, not the law of the gospel. Now, by how much the end of a thing is more noble, than the means conducing to the better accomplishing thereof, by so much hath the gospel a principality above the law; for Christ promised, as the apostle speaks, is the end of it. He is the end, not only in execution, but also in intention; that is, not only the end of it, fulfilling it, but also the ultimate end, at which the law points. It is true, it points indeed at wrath; but that is by accident, or as a second end; namely, if it fail of making men run to Christ.

(3.) This addition imports a consistence of the gospel, and of the law; that is, that they can well stand one by the other, without destroying each other, as additions can well stand by their principals. Their natures are not so contrary, considering the true use the law was intended for, but that they may well agree together, and both abide without destroying each other. In brief, by this phrase of addition, the apostle intimates, 1. That the law and promise are of different uses, but not contrary; and, therefore, 2. They may well stand together, being to let us now consider what use it serves for; "It was added because of transgression." I confess there is an obscurity in the expression, for the phrase imports, that sin was before the law, which seems a strange speech, because when there is no law, there is no transgression; but I will clear it as fully as I can. Note, therefore, the apostle speaks not here of the being of the law, but of the promulgation of it by Moses, which was a long time after the being of it. The law had its being from the time it was enacted, which was at the creation; and every aberration from

that was a transgression, before this publication. But to come to the purpose and use of the law intended in this expression, (because of transgression) this expression imports,

1. That, therefore, God published the law anew, because, before Moses, it being only written in man's heart, through his corruption it began to be so obliterated, that a little more would quite have defaced it; so that transgression would not appear to be transgression. Therefore, God revives the law, that, by making it so conspicuous, transgression also against it might be apparent in its proper hue; for, when the law comes fresh, sin revives. Hence it is that God did not only publish it anew, but also wrote it in tables of stone, that it might last fresh perpetually; this, then, is one use of it, to shew man his transgression, which he could never take notice of, but by looking in this clear glass, that represents all his wrinkles and spots to the life.

2. *It is added because of transgression*; that is, it is set up to keep men from transgression, for, *rectum est sui index et obliqui*. Now, supposing the law almost obliterated, were it not revived, man should not be able to distinguish what is good and what is evil; now the law renewed, propounding to man what is good and acceptable to God, by looking hereinto he shall see what will please, and what will displease; when he doth well, and when he fails; so that it serves for a rule of conduct, and a discernor of aberrations.

3. It imports, that the law was added, that when man transgresseth, he may know what to expect from it, if he have no other refuge; to wit, the curse attending every person that continues not in all things that are written therein. The sum is this, it serves to revive sin, to be a rule to avoid it, and to discover wrath to sinners; all which may, and doth, well consist with, nay, is subservient to, the promise of Christ; for Christ will not seem worth any thing; nay, men will turn away their faces from him, till the law discover them to be transgressors, yea, and subject to God's wrath for it; as blood-guiltiness pursued, made the city of refuge acceptable, and the manslayer to hasten thereto, which otherwise might have stood as a neglected place; Christ, as a physician, is only welcome when need calls for him.

Again, the rules and precepts of the law are very subservient unto Christ, as they adorn the life with a conversation be-
seem-

ng a companion of Christ, who calls us not unto uncleanness, but to holiness. Now had we not directions from the law, men would live as they list; Christians would be rather monsters than men; the law, in the rules of it, being holy and good, maintains a port befitting our communion with Christ. Some may say, if that be transgression still, which the law makes so, and those the rules of duty still, and that curse in force still unto such breach of those precepts, seeing, in many things, we all transgress those rules, the curse also lies on us still, and then where is life by Christ? I answer, That, in respect of those that are still under the law, all this is true; so saith the apostle, "They are under the curse," Gal. iii. 10. But so many as are within the covenant of grace, the law propounds but the desert of such transgression it intends, not the execution of it upon them; for then it should directly contradict the covenant of promise before made, which is proved to be impossible. You will say, then, That the use of the curse of the law is made void. I answer, That at the second publishing of the law, the execution of the curse could not be intended, because of the contradiction before-mentioned in the first institution. Indeed it was intended, but Christ hath borne it; and so, though he hath not utterly avoided it, because he endured it, yet he hath translated it from us; as a surety, by paying a debt, dischargeth the principal debtor. But, yet there is some use of the curse intended in the second promulgation, even to those to whom the covenant of grace belongs; namely, to hie them quickly out of themselves to Christ, as the fire that was coming to Sodom, though it was not sent to destroy Lot, yet it served to hasten him out of Sodom.

I come next to examine the duration of the law, in the uses before mentioned, which the apostle expresseth thus, "Till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made." There is some obscurity in this expression, for it seems by this, seeing Christ is the seed, therefore this law must remain but till he come; whereas the apostle professeth, That he seeks not to make void, but to establish the law by this doctrine. Let us, therefore, consider what he means by this, *Till the seed should come*. The seed of Abraham, in respect of the promise, whereof the apostle here speaks, is taken two ways, 1. For the person of Christ; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be

blessed.” 2. For the children of Abraham, according to faith, to wit, the company of all believers to the end of the world, “I will be the God of thee, and of thy seed after thee.” Now if you will understand by the seed here, the person of Christ, then conceive the meaning thus; that the law in the utmost rigour of it, is in force against man, till Christ come and abate the rigour, and take it upon himself; but, by seed here, we may understand Christ, *in aggregato*; to wit, mystical, consisting of himself the head, and the faithful his members; and so the law continues till that come; that is, till the whole body of Christ be made complete, by an actual subsistence of every member in him. Now this seed will not be wholly complete, till the consummation of all things. Indeed, the words immediately following give no little intimation that he understands seed thus; for it is the seed to whom the promise, to wit, of justification and life by Christ, was made; which cannot be understood of Christ personally, but of his mystical members: so then the law continues for a rule, and to point out the wrath due for transgressions; for so long as Christ hath any seed upon earth, the law is to hunt men into Christ, their rock of safety; and, another end is, for a rule to order their conversation in him.

Some, it may be, will object, that all this while it seems that Christ hath not freed us from being under the law, whereas the apostle saith, “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” I answer, 1. That in respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter of obedience, we are under the law still, or else we are lawless, to live every man as it seems good in his own eyes, which I know no Christian dares so much as think; for Christ hath given no new law divers from this, to order our conversation aright by; besides, we are under the law, to know what is transgression, and what is the desert of it. You will say, what then is the liberty which the apostle there speaks of? I answer having thus shewed how far the law is in force, I will now shew you what liberty we have from the primary intention of the law. The law, as it was a rule of life, so was it the only way to life: a long and hard way, nay, through man’s fall, an impossible way to be trod; insomuch, as there can be no access to life by it: this end of it is abolished by Christ, who now is the only true way to life; *So that none comes to the Father but by him*; a believer is not tied to seek life by his obedience to the law, but

by his faith in Christ. 2. The law was an executioner to avenge itself on trespassers ; it had a curse like a sting in the tail of it, but Christ hath redeemed his from this curse of it, being made a curse for them, enduring the severity of that wrath, which their sins deserved ; so that although in many things they offend all, yet God lays on Christ the iniquity of them all, by whose stripes they are healed. 3. The law stood upon exact and perfect obedience to every jot and tittle, for matter, measure, time, and end of every particular duty required ; so that if there happened but the least error, though out of mere forgetfulness, or any kind of weakness, it would not own or take notice of the most exact care and labour, but all must be quite lost. The rigour also hath Christ taken from the law, insomuch, as weak performances, if they be sincere, are accepted in him, the beloved. The apostle making use of that prophecy in Isaiah concerning the acceptable time when the Redeemer should come, applies it thus, till the time that grace comes. “ Now, is the accepted time,” 2 Cor. vi. 2. So again, shewing the excellency of Christ’s gospel above the law, he concludes, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, Heb. xii. 28 : and in Rom. xiv. 18, the same apostle saith, “ He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God.” so again, having said, that “ Of, through, and to Christ are all things,” Rom. xi. 36 ; he tells us in chap. xii. 1, that the presenting of our bodies a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable serving of him, is both “ a holy and acceptable service unto God ;” “ In my holy mountain shall the house of Israel serve me,” saith the Lord ; “ there will I accept them ; I will accept you with a sweet savour :” it is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ. 4. The law meeting with the corrupt nature of man, though in its own nature it be holy and good, yet accidentally, it had an irritating and enraging power : man’s heart would be the more upon sin, because of the restraints of the law, as a wild bull in a net ; *nitimur in vetitum* ; the more we are prohibited, the more by nature do our fingers itch. But Christ so crucifies the flesh, that he kills this itch, which made Paul say, “ I am dead unto the law ;” not only the condemning, but also the irritating power of it ; instead of hankerings, and shifts, and propensiveness to sin, Christ raiseth indignations against what the law forbids. 5 The law calls for bricks, but allows no straw ; for obedience, but

supplies no succour to help our infirmities; it saith, "Do this and live," but leaves a man to shift as well as he can: to do now the work, being infinitely beyond man's reach, it is impossible but he must sink under the burthen; this is that which makes duty so harsh, uncouth, and unsavoury to many: they look on it as a tiring thing; but this rigour also hath Christ taken away, promising never to fail; "Fear not, (saith he) I am with thee; I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee:" he will cause the lame to leap, the dumb to sing; he will carry the weary in his bosom, give them wings to mount, and strengthen them when they faint; he furnisheth with talents to trade with; he affords seed where he looks for a harvest.

S E R M O N L I I .

A FUNERAL SERMON, OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF
MR. BRUNSELL, VICAR OF WROUGHTON.

GALATIANS i. 8.

BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, SHALL PREACH
ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU, THAN (*or besides*) THAT
WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.

You may marvel, upon hearing this text, what I mean, to fall upon such a subject, on such an occasion as this is, which seems altogether incongruous unto it; and no marvel is it, for I marvelled as much at it myself, as any other can do: but to satisfy any curious inquisition, the occasion hereof was this.

This burning light, (whom Christ, I am persuaded, to the comfort of many) set upon this hill, or in this candlestick, and who now hath wasted himself in giving light to you; having some time before his death singled out this text, for what special reasons I cannot say, nor could learn; sent earnestly to speak

with me, and desired this last kindness of me, that I would discharge the world of him, and solemnize his funeral with a sermon upon it. I confess, I was at a stand so soon as I understood his mind, not as being unwilling to do this last office for him ; but, because I could not sound his reach herein ; neither could he well impart it to me, by reason of his infirmity, which had bereft him of his wonted faculties ; howbeit his deserving abilities and labours, besides mine own interest in him, challenge so much respect to his worth, as to fulfil his desire, although I know not whether I shall attain his aim or no, whereunto I should willingly have framed myself, could I have pumped it from him. I shall not need to say much to you of him, I say to you, with whom he so travailed in birth, as that he died in travail ; his constancy of labour, yea, till he could scarce creep to this place ; his extraordinary zeal in his ministry, with other commendable excellencies of ministerial parts and gifts, are so notorious, that all rhetorical expressions would be but as the lighting of a candle to give light to the sun.

This our zealous, indefatigable, and invincible spirited apostle of the Gentiles, who laboured in the work of the gospel more abundantly than they all, by the grace of Christ, (among the churches successfully planted by him ;) had, with no small diligence and care, reared a hopeful nursery from the ground among the Galatians, rooting and establishing them in the faith ; but not long after his departure, the envious one takes the advantage of his absence, and sends subverters among them, to turn them from the faith, once given to them ; whereof no sooner had the apostle notice, but, as a bear bereft of her whelps, his blood grows hot, the zeal of this people even eats him up, he cannot contain himself ; and therefore he breaks out very pathetically in this his epistle to them, “ Who suffers, and I burn not ? ” he is like a tender mother, when her child hath got a fall she startles, and is almost frightened ; so this apostle, after a very short salutation framed, answerable to the occasion thereof administered, begins very roundly with them (a far different strain from all the rest of his epistles) in chap. i. 6, “ I marvel, (saith he,) that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, into another gospel ; ” wherein he intimates the sad occasion of his writing, namely, the sudden seduction of them, by white devils, as Luther calls them, whom their master

had transformed into angels of light, like himself; pretending an evangelical ministry, even whilst they undermined Christ, the foundation.

In managing of which business he follows God's order, which he observed when our first parents were seduced, who began first with the ringleader; so the apostle first falls very foul on the seducers; whatever they be, thundering out the most direful execration against them. This he doth in my text, wherein we may, by a transverse order, observe,

1. The execration. 2. The ground of it. 3. The apostle's impartiality in the denunciations of it. In the execration you may observe, 1. The matter of it. 2. The manner of the denunciation. The matter is *anathema*; which, in the apostle's sense, is a delivering up unto Satan. The manner is by way of imprecation, let him be so; he arrogates not the act or the power of cursing to himself. The ground of this execration, is equivalent to the bitterness thereof; namely, a preaching another gospel besides, and different from, what Paul and his companions had before preached to them. What that preaching was, we must consider before we have done. Here is also the apostle's impartiality in this execration, which shews itself in his not exempting himself and his companions; "no, not an angel from heaven," if they should be guilty of this fact; wherein he shews he hath no fling at any particular men's persons, in that he would not spare himself. From whence I might note, (1.) That the purest planted churches, are subject to errors, yea, and that in matters of faith, as this was, which hits the heart of infallibility. (2.) That the best care of ministers cannot prevent seducers from sowing tares to choak wholesome doctrine. (3.) That seducers deceive, by specious cloaking their poison under the name of gospel, whereby they get securer entertainment. (4.) That the reverence of men's persons, or the excellency of their gifts and parts to win men, is no warrant to take any thing on their own credit. But the scantiness of time will not allow us the scope these points require, I will therefore confine myself to this general proposition; That whoever they be that preach any different doctrine, though under the name of gospel-preachers, from what St. Paul had before preached to the Galatians, are under the great curse. In the handling of which, all the difficulty lies in finding out what this gospel is, which St. Paul had preached to them, from

which, and what that doctrine is, to which they were seduced; for they are neither of them mentioned in the text: yet this is our sea-chart by which we must steer our course, if we mean to reach our port, least whilst we speak of seduction, we ourselves be seduced from the scope of our text. That which is his gospel, we must pick out of this epistle; for he no where delivers a set discourse of it as we find, only by way of redargution, from chap. 3, to the end of the epistle, he gives us some hints what it was. The fullest expression of the gospel, which he had preached to them, he here vindicates with an execration to the opposite party, you may find in chap. ii. 16, namely, "That we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," which he expounds to be a believing in Jesus Christ; not intending, hereby, utterly to abolish the law, as some slandered him; only excludes it in the matter of justification, as being altogether useless therein. Now, the contrary doctrine he so much disclaims against, is not the utter abolishing of Christ, which the false teachers did not attempt, but the superstructure of the works of the law; as if Christ could not profit unto justification, but by the addition of the works of the law unto faith in him. This is the sum of the matter, and the whole epistle spends itself in maintaining, with much zeal, his own doctrine, and with like zeal confuting the contrary.

Whosoever then preacheth a doctrine different from free justification, by faith alone in Christ Jesus, without the concurrence of any of the works of the law, is under the great curse, though he goes for an angel from heaven.

Some may say, This is an unseasonable point, not only in regard of the present occasion, but also of these present times; for that we have none among us who preach justification by works, and not by faith alone in Christ. As for the present occasion, I have spoken to that already; and for the present times, I know you are not ignorant, that this contrary doctrine to the apostle's, is one of the corner stones of the church of Rome; anathematizing the apostle's doctrine, and maintaining the merit of good works; which subject hath filled many volumes of theirs. But, it may be said, This doctrine hath been long exploded in this our church, it being the main cause of our separation from them. I know, you are not ignorant, how many among us, yea, and of the uppermost form (bishops) have warped of later times, and

have turned their faces to return back to the fleshpots of Egypt, and have been nibbling shrewdly at this colewort ; not fearing to affirm, That we are not now so angry with Rome, as in the first heat of our zeal. But, besides these gross Romanizers, we have zealots who advance works, yea, in the matter of justification, very much, and exceedingly diminish and derogate from the free grace of God in Jesus Christ ; who are, therefore, near unto cursing ; nay, so zealously affected are they this way, as that they stick not to revile, and with an heart-burning indignation, speak evil of that ministry, which extols and presseth the acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith ; though men be in the most sinful, and loathsome condition, as the most sure portion of such, if they can but lay hold on him, and come to him in that condition ; taxing such ministers, as if they were the ministers of licentiousness and libertinism, and as opening too wide a gap unto men. I speak what I know, and what I have felt. At present I shall spare to speak of that gross contradiction of the apostle's gospel, by the Romish faction, and factors, being sufficiently manifest, and shall confine myself to the latter sort of contradiction, being more subtle and prejudicial to God's people amongst us ; and herein discover how some join works to the free grace of God in Christ, unto justification, and how contrary it is to the apostle's gospel.

1. It is a common doctrine among the rigid troublers of the Israel of God, that men must have many legal preparations, and they must sensibly find them wrought in themselves, before they may dare to apply to Christ by faith for justification, otherwise their faith is mere presumption. As for instance, suppose a sinner hath lived in all manner of licentiousness (as Mary Magdalen), before he may believe that Christ hath justified him, he must forsake and find, by reflecting on himself, that he hath forsaken all his former evil ways, and must be stricken with inward terror, and feel the pangs of the new-birth, as they call it ; and be, I know not how much, or how long, (for their expressions intimate a strange depth) under the bondage of a kind of hellish conscience tormenting and racking them ; nay, more, they must be changed too, and find a delight in the law of the Lord, and a ready cheerfulness in obedience thereto ; and that not by a fit, but constantly, till they find all this, and much more of a like nature. Their time of believing in Christ is not

come, and that, before this, their faith is but a dream, and skinning over the sore; all which, occasions so much fear, as keeps many poor souls in bondage all their lives long, suspecting still, that the humiliation is not deep enough. Is not this to put the cart before the horse, or rather to send the cart a going, and the horse must come after? to have men sanctified before they can be justified. If men must be thus qualified, before they believe to justification, how can Christ be said to justify the ungodly? By this rule he rather justifies the godly. The time of man's being in his blood, is not the time of God's love when he enters into covenant with him, (by this rule) but rather the time of his comeliness when he is adorned; which is carnal doctrine, and a measuring God's way of love by man's: is not this an adding of the works of the law to the righteousness of Christ for justification? If not, why may not man be justified without all this addition? And if he may be justified without these works of the law, why may he not apply it? Some may say, 'They make none of this the cause of justification, but preparatives to it. I answer, They will not allow men to be justified without these works, and that justification belongs not to them, they may not apply it till it be thus; whereas the apostle's gospel is, we are justified by believing in Christ, for righteousness, without works; which he proves out of the thirty-second Psalm, "David (said he) describes the blessedness of the man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works;" so that works must not come in under any consideration at all, in the matter of justification; this sophistry will not have weight enough when it comes to the apostle's balance.

2. These men contradict the gospel of free justification by faith without works, whilst they not only require the being of such works before justification, but also make them a main, and immediate ground of believing it; for they usually affirm, that such, who apply to Christ without such qualifications, their application is groundless, and built upon the sand; but being thus wrought upon and changed, the ground-work is laid, they have a foundation, and therefore they need not fear; as if any foundation. or ground-work for justification can be found, saving Jesus Christ himself alone. He that hath any ground to believe besides Christ himself, doth he not make Christ imperfect, by adding some other thing to him? If they say they make not

these works the ground properly, but the reason of believing; I answer, that as there is no foundation, so no reason without Christ of believing. It is that these works sincerely wrought in a person, may serve as reasons, that they do believe; but they cannot be reasons, that they may believe. If any shall ask, why the apostle is so bitter against such as interweave works with faith in Christ? I answer, because they bring men into bondage, and keep them in it, laying heavy burthens upon them: this reason the apostle gives himself in chap. ii. 4, 5, "Because of false brethren, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Here, speaking of these seducers, he calls them false brethren, who came to spy their liberty in Christ, and to bring them into bondage, to whom he would not give place an hour; therefore he earnestly urgeth these Galatians in chap. v. 1, "That they stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Some may say, he speaks this of circumcision, which was a ceremony to be abolished; but not of works of righteousness. I answer, That he gives this but for one instance; for the seducers fell upon their keeping of the law of Moses, and circumcision both, as is plain by that expression of his chap. iii. 2—10; where the apostle disputes about the moral law in matter of justification. "This only would I learn of you, received you the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? and as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things in the book of the law to do them." So also in that dispute which was brought before the apostles at Jerusalem, which I suppose was occasioned by this seduction, whereupon that prime council was held; as in Acts xv. 5. "There were certain of the sect of the Pharisees, who thought it was needful to circumcise men, and command them to keep the law of Moses." Now this destruction of Christ's freedom they counted intolerable, and Peter saith in ver. 10, 11, "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples? but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

2. Another reason of the apostle's bitter execration against

those that mingled their works of the law in matter of justification, is, because this mixture tends to the frustration of the free grace of Christ, and to make it of none effect. This argument the same apostle useth in Rome xi. 6, "If by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;" intimating, that where any works come in, grace ceaseth to be grace. So, in Gal. v. 2, he saith, "Christ is become of none effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace."

3. The apostle anathematizeth those that bring in works towards justification, because this brings Christ much out of respect with men, and works into a far higher esteem than him: you shall observe, where such legal observances are required to application of justification, there is an hundred times more poring on such qualifications, than on Christ, and his free grace; the thoughts, cares, and passions, are infinitely more racked and intense about them, than him; their absence, or presence, work more strongly by far on the spirit and affections, than his presence, or his absence; Christ in a manner is forgotten and neglected, in comparison of them; almost all comfort, and all peace, stand upon their presence. Whereas the apostle's doctrine is, that being justified by faith, we have peace with God; and his prayer is, that they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing: he doth not say, That they may be filled with all joy in the presence of works: now what greater derogation can there be to Christ, than for him to be so much passed by, and to be so rarely and coldly frequented, whilst works bear so much of men, and bear the bell away; whilst one answer from works, *pro or con*, works more, and stirs more the spirit of a man, than twenty from Christ himself? let but such as are trained up under the bondage of works speak, if it be not just as I say. Some may say, what use is there then of works, this is the way to bring them out of request? I answer, this is an old cavil, and was made in the apostle's times, and is as hot now as ever, as if works could serve for no purpose, unless they be preferred before Christ: works were made as fire was, to serve, but not to rule; they were made to glorify God with, not to rob him of his glory; they serve for the ordering a man's conversation aright, not to get, no, nor to prepare acceptance with God. Coming to Christ is all that is needful

to justification, John i. 12. It matters not in what pickle; and this very coming is by the Father's drawing. "No man cometh to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." If a person can truly see Christ, the chiefest amongst ten thousands, all fair, and for that cause choose and close with him; neither good nor bad works have ought to do in this business, to hinder or farther justification, or acceptance of such a person by Christ. The truth is, this gospel is the only establisher of good works. 1. As it sets bound to them, as to their right ends. 2. As it shews the way to be enabled to do them. 3. As it shews their place and rank.

Use 1. This text should serve as fair warning to us, the ministers of the gospel, to take heed of running on this desperate shelf of preaching a different doctrine from the apostle's, which will swallow up all such mercilessly; and let us choose rather to lie under the heavy censure of men with the apostle himself, than to lie under his curse, by giving the freeness of grace its own due dimensions, without stinting it to the pleasure of men, for fear of a licentious abuse of it. In Paul's time men were as apt to wrest and abuse free grace to libertinism, as now; yet he feared not to impart to them to the full, the good pleasure of Christ for all that.

Some while they are busy with the whip to keep off dogs, fetch blood at the hearts of children with their causeless cautions, and then rejoice to see them in their spiritual afflictions, which methinks is an inhuman cruelty. Some say, men grow very presumptuous by such liberty preached; but children must not want their bread for fear of dogs, or have gravel mixt with it, lest they should surfeit of it. I grant, that we ought not to preach continuance in sin, that grace may abound, which cannot be truly inferred from this doctrine; for there is a vast difference betwixt Christ's shewing grace in the worst condition, and an allowing men to wallow in sin still; the apostle's gospel necessarily infers the first, but contradicts the last.

Use 2. This may serve as an item to all God's people. (1.) Not to censure the doctrine of free grace, lest they fall into the same condemnation, as partaking with the sin of seducers. (2.) Thankfully to embrace this doctrine, and hold it fast, whatever others preach different from it. (3.) To beware of men that come in sheeps' cloathing, pretending to lay a sure foundation

by laying it deep, as they call it, whilst indeed they are ravenous wolves, tearing and racking poor souls, frightening and torturing their poor consciences, about the matter of justification. I speak not against the utmost discovery of the sinfulness of sin, to make it odious to men; but for requisites, and I know not what qualifications (besides faith alone in Christ) to justification; I say, beware of them, lest you receive the true gospel of Christ in vain; lest Christ himself grow into contempt and neglect with you, and works become more glorious in your eye, than he, and so you be turned aside from him, who calleth you from darkness, to his marvellous light; and lest he shake off the dust of his feet against you, as a self-willed, and self-conceited people

